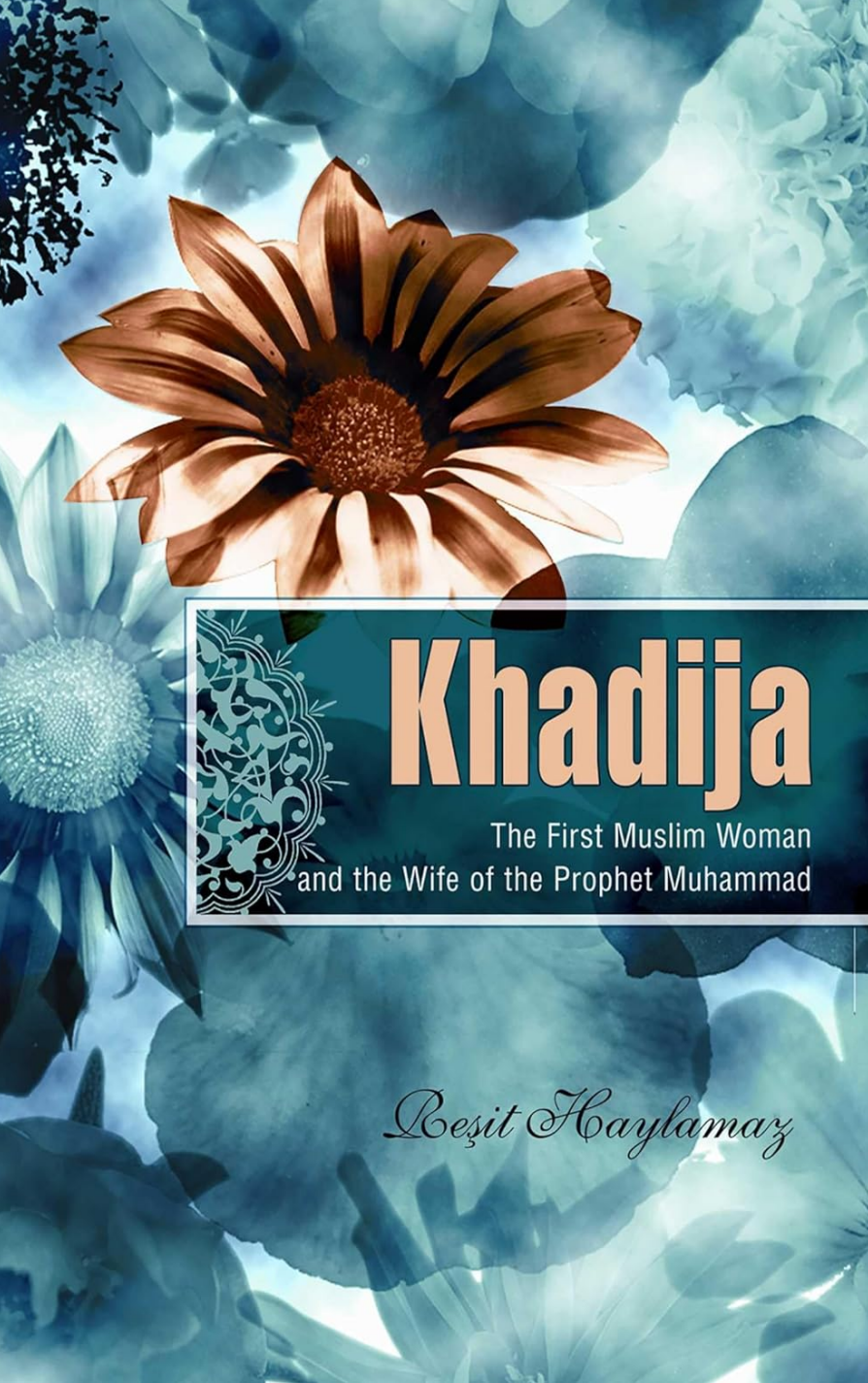

Khadija
The First Muslim Woman
and the Wife of the Prophet Muhammad
Reşit Haylamaz

C0060 29684

okshields Library
slie Street
ow G41 2L
WITHDRAWN

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/khadijafirstmusl0000hayl

KHADIJA

THE FIRST MUSLIM AND THE WIFE OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD ﷺ

Reşit Haylamaz

Translated by Hülya Coşar

TUGHRA
BOOKS
New Jersey

Copyright © 2012 by Tughra Books

Originally published in Turkish as *Hazreti Hatice, Kadınlık Aleminin Sultanı* in 2006

15 14 13 12 5 6 7 8

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by permission in writin

Glasgow Life
Glasgow Libraries

ACC

C 006029684

Askews & Holts | 26-Jun-2013

297.642 / WF | £6.99

Published by Tughra
345 Clifton Ave., Cl
NJ, 07011, USA

www.tughrabooks.c

Library

Haylamaz, Resit.
[Hz. Hatice. Englis.]
Khadija : the first Muslim and the wife fo the Prophet Muhammad / Resit Haylamaz, Hulya Cosar.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN-13: 978-1-59784-121-4 (pbk.)
1. Khadijah, d. ca. 619. 2. Muhammad, Prophet, d. 632--Family. 3. Muslim women--Saudi Arabia--Biography. I. Cosar, Hulya. II. Title.
BP80.K48H3913 2007
297.6'42--dc22
[B]

2007025219

Printed by
Çağlayan A.Ş., Izmir - Turkey

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface vii
Introduction ix
The Family Tree of Khadija xi

A Noble Family 1
Sister of the Sacred House 7
The Good Tidings 9
Sons of Tahira 12
Divine Direction 14
A Step Closer 18
Trip to Damascus 21
The Wedding 26
The Household 33
A Home Full of Peace 35
The Fruits of the Blessed Marriage 37
Premonitions of the Divine Message 40
The Coming of the Archangel 42
The First Revelation 46
The First Muslim 50
The Cherished Memory 56
Exchanges with the Angel 58
Following Every Breath the Prophet Takes 60
The Pioneer of Struggle 61
The Boycott 63

The Farewell 69
Unforgettable Memories 72
Zaynab and Her Husband 74
Undying Loyalty 85

Conclusion 87
The Major Events in the Life of Khadija 89
Notes 93
Bibliography 97

PREFACE

Generally, people take pains to imitate those who are presented to them as models and try to live a similar life to theirs. Those who live their life according to these 'archetypes' are better able to lead exemplary lives, whereas so many who have not found guidance in such models are directionless. For this reason, the Qur'an from time to time draws attention to the lives of the Prophets, providing examples from their lives so that people can see a portrait of the ideal believer. The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, likewise referred repeatedly to the same examples in order to present this model to humanity.

Even in this so-called "modern" age, humanity has not been able to rid itself of hedonism and indulgence, so our only chance to live in happiness and well-being depends on having such models. The communities which have been able to produce from among themselves such examples have, to a degree, begun to make progress in this. The ideal that is needed today can only be achieved in the footsteps of people who spread light to their surroundings like stars. In order to reach perfection, a person must shape his or her life according to their pattern.

According to Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the eminent Companions, who were among

the best people of all the ages, are a rich source of treasure to solve today's problems from their living examples.

Thus I present here for you, an active woman, a supreme model, an unforgettable person, the first of the first, the queen of all women, in short, the life of blessed Khadija.

May it be a source of good for all.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most pressing needs for us today is to know the exemplary lives of the Companions who were trained firsthand by Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. The solutions for many problems that seem unsolvable may be found hidden there. For not only did they apply the practical principles of social life, they did so through divine direction and prophetic guidance, thus providing the prototype of a humanitarian existence and an example for all those who would come after them.

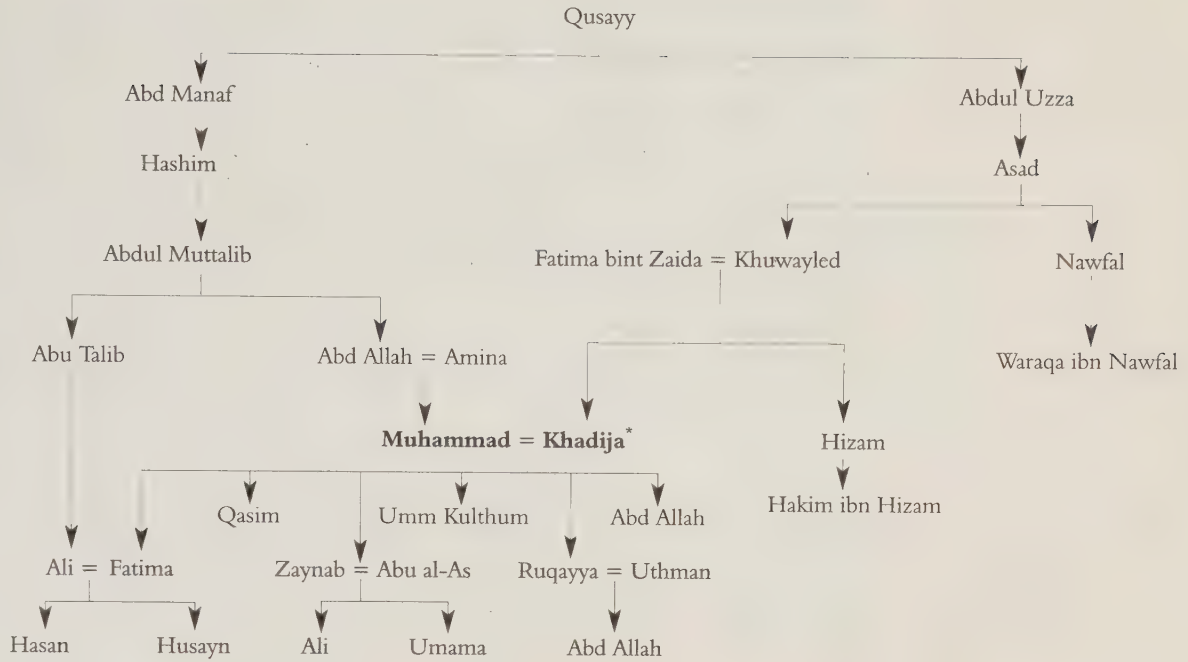
There are many different methods that could be utilized to explain the historical aspects of their very important lives. I have chosen to focus mostly on how the lessons of their time can be applied today, so that they may bring the most benefit, rather than dwelling on what was yesterday. In doing so, instead of filling in the blanks with my imagination, I have thought it best to reflect the dialogue between certain Companions as it refers to the blessed person of Khadija Al-Kubra. I have preferred to leave it to the experts by showing the sources as they are written, without getting into textual critique, as that is not the goal here.

Being one of the most dynamic and vital personages of the Islamic history, the exemplary life of Khadija has been a source of inspiration and encouragement for all men and women. She is a guide and role model to all who aspire to

active service, with their lives and property, on the path of God and the Prophet. Her path demonstrates potential ways for those who wish to be remembered centuries after they have passed away. She also paved the way for women by setting an example with the things she achieved as a woman, even though she lived in times when this was a physical disadvantage and limitation.

So, without further ado, I leave the reader to contemplate her life.

The Family Tree of Khadija



* Khadija had two sons, Hala and Hind, and a daughter, Hind, from her previous marriages. The Prophet's line continued through Khadija's daughter Fatima.

A NOBLE FAMILY

Do not fear! God will undoubtedly protect and keep you. For you look after your relatives, assist the weak, and clothe the needy. You are always generous to guests, you continuously seek after the Truth, and have devoted yourself completely to righteous ways ..."

These are the words Khadija said to her husband Muhammad, God's Messenger, on his return to Mecca from Hira—the mountain-top cave at the outskirts of Mecca where he received the first revelation of the Qur'an through Archangel Gabriel. He had hurried to his beloved wife for consolation after the intense experience of the first visitation by the Angel of Revelation.

So, who was Khadija, who was able to show such unhesitating strength of conviction immediately upon hearing this news? Who was this person supporting and reassuring the Prophet when he confided in her, and reminding him of his past deeds as confirmation that his unsettling experience was truly from God, and then recommending that they seek the advice of the scholar, Waraqa ibn Nawfal, so that he might affirm what she had told him? What were her sources of nourishment and counsel, and which virtues did she attain through determination of will?

Blessed Khadija, may God be pleased with her, was born about 555 CE, fifteen years before the Abyssinian ruler of

Yemen, Abraha, and his army attacked the Ka'ba, an event commonly used as a marker in Arab history.[2] Her father was Khuwaylid ibn Asad, and her mother was Fatima bint Zaida.

Khuwaylid was among the most honored members of the Qurayshi tribe, and the Meccans would obtain his opinion on important matters. Together with the grandfather of the Prophet, Abdul Muttalib, he was one of the members of the delegation sent to prevent a danger that was sensed in parts of Yemen.

She also shared a common line of ancestry with Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him: Qusayy ibn Kilab connected their family lineage five generations back. There was a similar connection on her mother Fatima's side, with her ancestors Luayy and Abdi Manaf connecting Khadija to Muhammad's family.

At the same time, Khadija's immediate circle played an important role in preparing her for the days to come. It is worthwhile briefly describing those closest to her to understand the environment she originated from.

Her uncle Amr ibn Asad, who took over the duty of her father after he died in the war of Fijar,[1] was one of the leading names in Mecca.

Her sister Hala married Rabi' ibn Abdul Uzza and they had a child, Abu al-As, who became known as "the trustworthy." After receiving consent from the Prophet, Khadija married their daughter Zaynab to this nephew, known for his honesty.

Hakim ibn Hizam was Khadija's other nephew. Hakim, known as the first child born in the Ka'ba, was a great supporter of his aunt in her business affairs. He was born three years before the Year of the Elephant, and was also one of

Muhammad's close friends before his Prophethood. He had undertaken the duty of helping the pilgrims who came to Mecca; this duty had been passed down from his forefather Qusayy.

It was he who bought Zayd, who would become one of the greatest helpers of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in the initial days of Islam, from the Ukaz fair and brought him to Khadija. (The Prophet emancipated Zayd and became his guardian.) Hakim also exerted great effort in helping the new Muslim community to find resources during the boycott years.

After the Battle of Hunayn between the believers and the polytheist Quraysh, Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, gave Hakim a hundred camels from the property captured in the victory, as he wanted to gain the heart of this valuable person. Years later, when Hakim became Muslim after Mecca was conquered, the Prophet complimented him by saying, "Certainly when you became a Muslim you brought many prior good deeds with you," referring to his previous beneficence.[3]

The *Dar'un-Nadwa* (House of Nadwa) was a meeting hall where important decisions were made. This was left to Hakim as inheritance, and he sold it to Muawiya, donating all the proceeds for the sake of God. He died fifty-four years after the Hijra (the emigration of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and his followers to the city of Medina in 622 CE).[4]

Hakim was a merchant by trade. When he conquered Mecca, Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, included him in his greetings, and declared that it was safe to seek refuge in Hakim ibn Hizam's residence. Hakim

showed an enormous sense of self-sacrifice to make up for the length of time that he had not accepted Islam even though it was so near to him; he wanted to try to compensate for his old life. On one occasion, he decided to go on the Hajj, and before departing, he donated a hundred camels and a thousand sheep and freed a hundred slaves. After making a promise to God and the Prophet on the day of Hunayn, he never again requested anything from anyone and did not accept even things that were rightfully his after the war. He was one hundred and twenty when he passed away; he had lived for sixty years in the Age of Ignorance before Islam, and the other sixty years as a Muslim.

Waraqa ibn Nawfal was Khadija's cousin and, during her younger years, her biggest source of information. He had become knowledgable enough to read and understand the Torah and the Gospel in Hebrew and was a seeker for the true path because he found the idea of worshipping idols abominable. His searching led him to information in the scriptures foretelling the Last Prophet, and he started waiting anxiously.

He used to tell his cousin Khadija of his experiences; he was preparing her for the days to come. It was because of this that she used to relay all new information to him, and he would interpret and explain it to her in a manner that she would understand.

In those days, poetry was an important tool for communication and Waraqa, from time to time, would express his intentions with poetry. One day, when Khadija had come to ask him some questions, his verse spoke of marvelous things. Although he said the future was hidden from him, he knew that Angel Gabriel would bring revelation to one called Ahmad (the Qur'an also refers to Muhammad, peace and blessings

be upon him, as "Ahmad," meaning "most praiseworthy"[5]), who would be appointed a prophet, sent with God's message of salvation to humanity.

Years later, Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was asked about Waraqa ibn Nawfal, who had studied the scriptures and refused the polytheism of Mecca in the pre-Islamic period. Khadija, who was present, said, "There is no doubt that he attested to you, though he died before your Prophethood was declared." To this, the Prophet added about him, "I am certain that I saw him wearing white. If he had been one of the inhabitants of hell, I would have seen him with different clothing."[6]

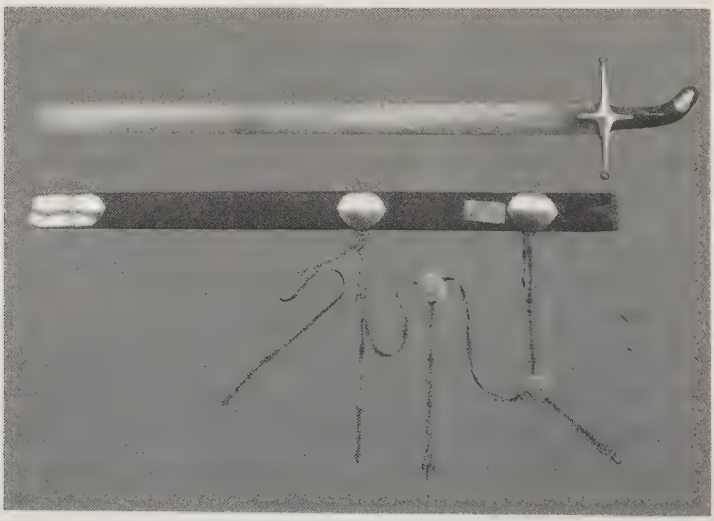
On another day, after he heard someone talking about him, the Prophet gave the good tidings that Waraqa was in heaven (which had been shown to him).[7]

One day, Waraqa happened to pass by Bilal, a slave who believed the Prophet, who was being tortured horrendously to force him to abandon his religion. Seeing this unbearable persecution and terrible cruelty of the Quraysh toward Bilal, he said, "One! One! I swear by God that if they kill him today, I verily will consider it a grace."[8]

Because of these and other statements the Prophet made about him, some scholars say that Waraqa ibn Nawfal was a Muslim and count him among the Companions. Since he died just after the first revelation to Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, he went to the other world without the chance to share in the latter's Prophetic life and mission.

Zubayr ibn Awwam, who would become famous as the Prophet's apostle, was another of Khadija's nephews. At the same time, Zubayr's mother, Safiyya, was Muhammad's paternal aunt.

Zubayr became a Muslim when he was twelve and emigrated first to Abyssinia (present-day Ethiopia) and then to Medina. Zubayr was the first Muslim to draw his sword valiantly in defense against the violence of the non-believers. Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, said that on the day of the Battle of Badr, the angels descended in the image of Zubayr.[9] He also said in the Qurayza Campaign, "Each prophet has an apostle, and my apostle is Zubayr."[10] He was one of the ten Companions who were blessed with the good news of heaven while they were still alive. In the times after the Prophet's death, he became a leader of the Muslim community, being one of the six members of the committee which Umar formed and playing a role in the election of the next caliph.



The sword of Zubayr ibn Awwam
Topkapi Palace Museum, Inventory no. 21/140

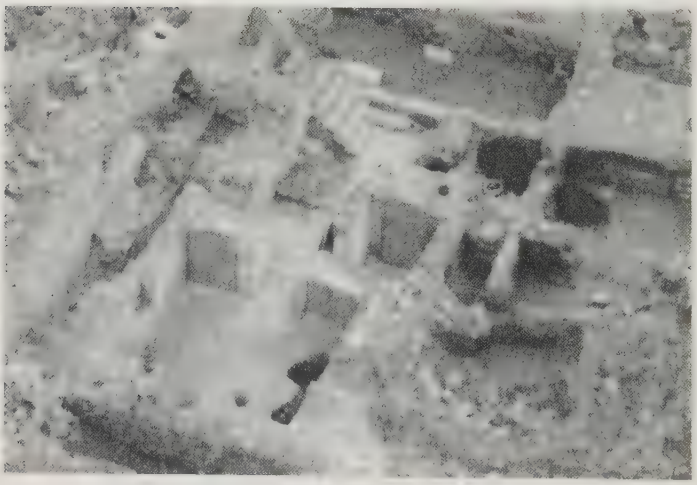
SISTER OF THE SACRED HOUSE

Khadija's grandfather Asad ibn Abdul Uzza's house was approximately nine feet to the west of the Ka'ba, the Sacred House.[11] When it was dawn, his house was in the shade of the Sacred House, and in the evening, at sunset, the Sacred House was in the shadow of his house. It is because of this proximity that his house was known as the "sister of the Sacred House."

In fact, one of the branches from the yard of this house had stretched toward the Sacred House, and those who came to circumambulate would encounter problems by getting caught in the branch. Umar eventually cut down the tree, and gave a cow as compensation. He also brought a final solution to the problem by paying for the land and including it in the *Haram*, the Sacred Precinct.

Before her marriage to Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, Khadija resided in the district of Ajyad, a place also known as "Castle Mountain." Later on, she would give this house as a present to her daughter Zaynab when she married Abu al-As. And Umama, who would be spouse to Ali after Fatima's death, would also be born in this house. After Abu al-As' emigration to Medina, this house would be confiscated by cousins, just as all the other Emigrants lost their properties in Mecca, and the legacy of the house would come to an end.

After her marriage to the Prophet, Khadija moved into the house they purchased from Hakim ibn Hizam, and their children would be born in that house. After the Emigration, this house would be sold by Abu Talib's other son, Aqiyl, and thus the house that witnessed many of the revelations and was the place in which people were called to Islam for thirteen years fell into the hands of others. In fact, before the Emigration, this house had become a place where all people, not only Muslims, often came. For example, some of the important names in Mecca, like Abu Jahl, Abu Sufyan and Akhnas ibn Shariq, would secretly come to the vicinity of this house and listen to the Qur'an.[12]



Aerial view of Khadija al-Kubra's house

THE GOOD TIDINGS

At the time Khadija was born, the Hijaz was, in every sense of the word, living a time of ignorance. However, it was still possible to find roses amid the swamp—people who were untouched by the dirt and filth of ignorance. People like Waraqa ibn Nawfal, Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh, Quss ibn Saida, Akhsam ibn Sayfi, Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma, Uthman ibn al-Huwayrith and Zayd ibn Amr were among this small minority; they searched for the truth by trying to follow the fundamentals of the Abrahamic path, hoping to attract the attention of others to these principles and values.

In fact, the homes of these people who had reached the highest degree of true knowledge available in those times became like centers attracting others who, like them, were seeking truth. From time to time, they dispensed advice to people, and at other times they used the power of poetry to express lasting messages.

In summary, Khadija was one of the rare people who was not affected by the sleaze and filth of that Age of Ignorance. Also, she relied on Waraqa, who was not only a close relative but also an important source of knowledge and solved all her problems.

She had always led an upright life. Her chastity, dignity, and elegance were virtues widely known and talked about. That is why they used to call her "*Tahira*," meaning "pure and

clean," even in those days when higher values had been all but lost. Amongst the women of the Quraysh, she was called "*Sayyida*," a term of great respect meaning "a great lady." She was also known as "*Jayyida*," referring to her sharp wit at grasping things with deep insight and quick understanding.

The Sacred House was a holy place long before Islam. After the rites of pilgrimage were adulterated and altered, people kept coming on pilgrimages to circumambulate it naked. As polytheism spread throughout Arabia, they assigned holiness to it by placing in it idols, each representing a tribe. Maintaining the shrine and seeing to the needs of the pilgrims who came to the Sacred House was a source of pride in those days as it is today; and this important duty would pass as a legacy from generation to generation, so that the Keepers were very highly regarded. Qusayy ibn Kilab, who was in Prophet Muhammad's lineage and Khadija's fourth-generation relative, was one of the exceptional persons who was a leader in this prestigious duty.

Thus, Khadija was brought up in this atmosphere, where Abrahamic traditions were carried on and discussions of a religious nature were always going on—and she absorbed all of this. Especially Waraqa, widely respected for his piousness, was highly knowledgeable about the Jewish and Christian faiths and would speak of a Prophet still to come. As he knew, each Prophet that had previously come gave good tidings of this foretold Prophet's arrival. The Torah and the Gospel also made mention of him.

In actual fact, this long-awaited arrival was a favorite topic, not only of Waraqa, but also of the whole Hijaz,[13] and even of the whole Arabian Peninsula. Most of the Arabs seemed to be competing to see who could speak of him most, and they

discussed the descriptions of him and his qualities, as if awaiting the approaching birth of a baby son. They talked of the environment in which he would emerge and all the signs that would portend his coming.

Khadija, too, had heard the good tidings and was waiting for this Prophet's arrival with genuine faith. All around her the talk of him echoed in her ears, and she must have felt his approaching presence like an elusive dream, as she listened to them tell of his every aspect, from his height to his voice, from his habits to his nobility.

The scholars spoke of the prophecies of the advent of the Awaited Prophet. And the signs began, one by one, to come true. It was possible to feel the shadow of the "Foretold Prophet" all over. Throughout the region, there seemed to be a growing air of preparation for the celebration to come.

SONS OF TAHIRA

When she came of age, Khadija became a marriage candidate that many noble young men wanted to wed. Indeed, who would not want to pursue marriage to someone like her? In terms of ancestry, she came from a noble and upright clan; in terms of her social standing, she belonged to a respected and well-to-do family. She was also comely and intelligent, and her behavior showed maturity and balance. Her first husband was Abu Hala Hind ibn Zara. However, after a short time Abu Hala died, leaving to Khadija a great fortune. Their marriage produced two sons named Hind and Hala.

Hind stayed close beside his mother all the time, even when she married Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Thus, he would be brought up under the guidance of Prophet Muhammad and given the moniker, "*Rabib ar-Rasululllah*" ("trained by the Prophet").

Hind went to the battles of Uhud and Badr with the Prophet. After the Prophet's death, he was also amongst the ranks of the fourth Caliph Ali ibn Abi Talib in the Battle of the Jamal, and he became a martyr in the struggle for the restoration of justice.

Hind, who led an exemplary life in every aspect, preserved and passed on precious memories; he remembered and described in detail the Prophet's physical appearance, his

exemplary morals, and his comportment to Hasan, his sister Fatima's child, when Hasan wanted to hear of his grandfather, the Prophet.[14] In fact, both before and after the death of Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, since Hind lived with the Prophet, he had no trouble describing him, whereas other people found it impossible to look directly at the Prophet because of his holiness and grandeur.

After Abu Hala's death, Khadija married Atiq ibn Ayidh, from the line of Banu Makhzum. However, that marriage, too, was not destined to last long. Atiq ibn Ayidh died shortly afterward, leaving behind a daughter named Hind.

Hind, entrusted to Khadija, remained with her mother until she came of age, when she married Safiyy ibn Umayy, from the Banu Makhzum family. From this marriage, Khadija was to have a grandchild named Muhammad. From then on, Muhammad, son of Hind, and his descendants would be remembered as "the sons of Tahira."

DIVINE DIRECTION

Dreams are an important source of information that honor the house of prophethood. Generally, they are a vehicle of revelation and one of the forms of Divine direction. According to Blessed Aisha, Prophet Muhammad's dreams were as clear as the morning light, and they would occur in a way that left nothing to interpretation.

It can be inferred that this is also valid for all the inhabitants of a Prophet's house, in accordance with their elevated role and position. In giving spiritual nourishment to those who would be close to the coming Prophet, God was preparing them for all that was to come. Even before their paths met, Khadija had dreams and could see signs of the Prophet that was about to be appointed.

On one occasion, she saw a strong light, like the moon or sun, come into her house and into her bosom, radiating out and enlightening the whole universe.

She woke up in a fearful and nervous state. She believed it had to have meaning because there was no such thing as a coincidence in this world. She went to her mentor and spiritual confidant, her cousin, to tell him of the dream.

Waraqa, then an old man, knew that there was something going on as soon as she came, and when he heard what she told him, he was astounded. His comments and thoughts were naturally not different from what he had said before,

for he was one of those rare people that saw the metaphysical dimension of events. He said in great excitement, "Good tidings, O cousin! Good tidings to you! This dream is undoubtedly a gift from God's bounty to you. Soon God will grant your home Divine light. Of course, God knows best, but I think it may be the light of the Prophet."[15]

As much as she liked the interpretation, she knew that she could not be satisfied with this much; she wanted to hear more. So, she just stood there for a while. Waraqa, seeing her in this state, decided to spell out his prediction, and made the following astonishing statement:

"The Last Prophet has entered the world. You will become his family. In your lifetime, he will receive Divine revelation, and his religion will encompass the entire universe. You will be the first of his believers. This Prophet will be amongst the Quraysh, from the family of Hashim."

His prediction, so definite and specific, would prove accurate. Waraqa spoke without any doubt. Not only was he certain of the Prophet's arrival, he also was aware of the fact that he would marry Khadija. Through him, the final religion would be presented to humanity, encompassing the whole world. He even saw that this Prophet would come from amongst the Quraysh and the lineage of Hashim. It seems crystal clear that, as he was interpreting the dream, Waraqa perceived the reality of the events that were to come one by one.

Of course, Khadija had many other such dreams as well. In addition, on that day, besides her dream and Waraqa's interpretation, elsewhere in Mecca and the Hijaz, other unexpected and extraordinary events were to occur, as she would soon discover.

It was a festival morning, and the Meccan ladies were sitting together and celebrating amongst themselves. Khadija had completed her circumambulation of the Ka'ba and was probably praying for her dream to come true. After the circumambulation, she joined the women sitting down. Before long, a man they did not recognize appeared.[16] When he approached them, he raised his voice, saying: "O Meccan women!"

Of course, all faces turned to where the voice was coming from. They wondered what this stranger had to say. And, in any case, why had he come near to the women and spoken to them?

While these questions rose in their minds, he continued excitedly, "There is no doubt that a Messenger will come from your land. His name is Ahmad. (Another name of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, mentioned in the Qur'an) Whoever has the opportunity to marry him should say 'yes' to him without thinking twice."[17]

Most of the women who heard him thought the man delirious. Therefore, they continued what they were doing, telling him to 'cut the nonsense,' and others threw stones at him, calling him a 'lunatic.'[18]

But the one to whom these words were addressed, Khadija, was the only one who took them seriously. With each passing day, the pieces were coming together, preparing the background for the bigger picture to emerge.

As can be seen, fate had prepared a path for Khadija, and she was walking this path, step by step, with holy blessings. Everything was pointing to his coming. The time was nearing for their paths to meet. As the Prophet once said, people are similar to resources that are yet to be discovered; if they have value, this will eventually be noticed, bringing them to

the place they merit. At the same time, souls which are compatible will attract each other and meet on common ground.

But, in fact, there was no need to even think about it; there were only a handful of good, decent people left in those times when humanity was morally bankrupt. So, she did not have much trouble finding the right address. In the Mecca of her day, there was only one person who fit all the descriptions she had heard, and the resemblance between him and the awaited one was striking. The most important quality in that community was trustworthiness, and the most perfect example of this quality could only be found in Muhammad the Trustworthy, son of Abd Allah. Khadija began to scrutinize his every step, finding out all she could about him and his life.

A STEP CLOSER

Khadija was unparalleled in terms of her wealth and a rare treasure in terms of her honor and nobility. During the summer and winter months, she would direct caravans to Damascus and Yemen, conducting business with people whom she trusted. In those times of ignorance, when women were devalued and looked down upon, it took great courage for a woman to organize caravans and conduct international trade, as this was not an easy task. It was through this business that she would get the opportunity to meet in person the Last Prophet, whose image she had already formed in her mind.

She was in search of personnel to hire for the caravan to Damascus, and also for someone trustworthy who could do business on her behalf. To this end, she sent her men to begin the search. She would choose from the candidates and then conduct her business as she had before.

Abu Talib was among those who heard this announcement. Thus, the events that led to the meeting of Khadija and the Prophet had been set in motion. Abu Talib came to his nephew to tell him of this opportunity:

"O my brother's son! I am a man who does not have any property left. As you have witnessed, time has worked against us, and these years have not been prosperous. We have neither property nor business. But there is a caravan ready to go to

Damascus, and Khadija is looking for men that can carry out the business. As much as I do not want you to go to Damascus, lest someone there might bring you harm, I have no choice. If you go to her, I am sure that she would choose you because of your spotless character."

It was easy to say this, but to put it in action proved a little more difficult. That is why this could not be left to chance. To this end, Atika bint Abdul Muttalib, Prophet Muhammad's aunt, came into the picture, stating that he should not be put in the position of having to explain himself. His aunt, in fact, was married to Khadija's brother (who was also Zubayr ibn Awwam's father), Awwam ibn Khuwaylid. She was in a position where she knew both parties and wanted to be a guide to bring the matter to a successful close.

So, the bulk of the duty lay with Abu Talib. But before he could work on this, he needed the approval of Muhammad the Trustworthy. Abu Talib went to see Khadija as soon as he got the go-ahead from his nephew. He felt a need to tell her about his nephew personally. Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was the most trusted individual in Mecca. Therefore, Abu Talib thought, this should be taken into account when hiring him, and his wages should be different from those of others. He knew how much Khadija paid for this type of work, and he was going to request double what she normally paid.

Before long, Abu Talib was in the presence of Khadija. After the customary greetings, he brought up the topic of the caravans and started talking about the virtues of his nephew Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

What a blessing this was. Khadija had the excitement of a person who finds what she is looking for right before her

nose. She felt this happiness in her soul and knew that, even before the caravan took to the road, she had already won the greatest prize. She was dizzy with joy because the moment she had been waiting for all her life was about to occur. She was startled out of these thoughts by Abu Talib's words as he said, "O Khadija! I received news that for this job, you are going to give two camels as wages. My nephew is Muhammad the Trustworthy, and I request double that for him."

For a while, she contemplated this proposal in her head. Could there be bargaining for such a gain! How could one talk of camels when the doors of happiness in both this world and the next were open! So, she said, "O Abu Talib! Verily you ask for an easy and pleasurable amount. Even had you asked for much more than this, I swear that I would have given that also."[19]

She gave the best of her servants, Maysara, to accompany Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, on the journey. She repeatedly cautioned Maysara and got reassurance that he would do as he was told. He would be in her service and report everything back to Khadija without fail. She knew that she should try to benefit from being this close to Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and thus she repeatedly told Maysara how important his role was, making him promise that he would report back to her everything that he witnessed without skipping a single detail.

TRIP TO DAMASCUS

At last, the caravans commenced their journey, which would last three months. During this journey, those on the trip got to know each other and had the opportunity of knowing the "Most Trustworthy" more closely. After a long and arduous journey, they finally arrived in Damascus. Everyone was in and out of the bazaar and shops, eager to sell what they had brought and to purchase new stock.

At one stage, Maysara caught a glimpse of a heated discussion between Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and another character. He had to know what was happening as he had to report this back on his return. When he came near to them, he realized that this was a bargaining matter. The man was requesting Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, to swear upon the greatest idols of that time, Lat and Uzza. But how could he swear by these wretched man-made idols, idols which he had rejected his whole life? Of course, the future Prophet was objecting to this request, saying, "I will never swear by their names, as there is nothing that seems so unlovable to me as these."

Maysara did not interfere at all. He was happy that he had witnessed another thing that he would be able to report to his mistress. The man, who saw the determination of Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, changed his mind about the pledge on the names of Lat and Uzza, finalizing the business on Muhammad's terms.[20]

The man then secretively sidled up to Maysara after Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, left his side, asking him about this man who did not want to swear on Lat and Uzza's names. He asked excitedly, "Do you know him? Who is this man?"

Then, even before Maysara had a chance to answer, he made his judgment and said, "Do not leave his side; undoubtedly, he is the Prophet."[21]

Finally, their business in Ḍamascus was finalized, and they set off on their way back. They had sold the goods that they had brought with them, and after having completed their trade, they were on their way to Mecca. They stopped when it became too hot to walk and the road became arduous. Each found a place to sit, dealing with their sums and trying to relax. Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, went to sit under the shade of an old tree.

Before long, Maysara saw someone running towards them from a distance. This was none other than the famous monk, Nestor, who had been watching them from a distance. He came up to Maysara and breathlessly asked, "Who is that cooling off under that tree?"

For Maysara this was an easy question to answer. Without hesitating he replied, "That is Muhammad, son of Abd Allah. He is a youth from the family of Hashim."

At first, the man shook his head, as if he was not happy with the answer and the style. It began to seem his question had been rhetorical. His demeanor showed the response, "You do not know," and he said meaningfully to Maysara, "I swear that none other than a Prophet is sitting beneath that tree!"[22]

He went on to ask Maysara about the most common signs, and when he received positive answers to his ques-

tions, he said in a confident manner, "There is no doubt that he is the awaited Prophet. And he is the last of all Prophets."[23]

The priest, however, could not leave. It was obvious that having found the one he was looking for so near, he wanted to get more information about him. That is why he kept asking Maysara about the future Prophet resting under the tree, and wanted him to tell him of all the events that they had witnessed along the way. So, Maysara went on to tell the priest of the event that had taken place in the market, when Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, would not swear on the idols. The priest's excitement doubled. It was obvious that he could not contain himself. The judgment that he had given became even more certain and he said with absolute assurance, "I swear that he is the awaited Prophet. Keep a good eye on him!"[24]

After having said this, he ran to the side of Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and first kissed him respectfully on his forehead, then bowed to his feet and said, "I witness that you are the one foretold in the Torah."[25]

As they went on, the weather was very hot and Maysara was astonished to see two angels in the form of clouds protecting and shading the future Prophet. Two clouds in such hot weather... And two clouds that continuously followed him. Two clouds that went where he went and stopped when he did...

Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, on the other hand, continued on his way resolutely, as if there were nothing out of the ordinary.

Of course, for Maysara, this journey was different from others; he had not witnessed any wrongdoings, nor had he experienced any misgivings. What they had taken to Damascus had been sold at the best price, and what they brought home

was sold at double their investment. It was obvious that Khadija had finally got the quality she was searching for. She had conducted business with many others; however, dealing with the "Most Trustworthy of Humanity" was very different.

Yet, in truth, Khadija was not really after goods or amassing profit upon profit. She was anxiously waiting for Maysara to return so that she could hear all that he had witnessed. Maysara first relayed the priest's words to her. Then, he told her of the two clouds that had followed them. He also told her of the oath incident in Damascus, the Prophet's reaction, and what the man had told him afterwards. He spoke much of Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, giving every detail of all that he had experienced on the journey. He could not say enough about Muhammad's extraordinary steadfastness and confidence.

These words were what Khadija had, no doubt, been hoping to hear. She was trying to contain the expectation that was rising in her soul. How could it not be so? All the roads and signs pointed to him!

She rose and went to her spiritual mentor, Waraqa. She was going to share what Maysara had told her with her cousin.

Waraqa also was excited at what he heard. He, too, had become sure that he had found what he was looking for. He said to Khadija, who was waiting for his response, "If what you say is true, O Khadija, there is no doubt that Muhammad is this nation's prophet. I also knew that this nation had an awaited Prophet. And this time is his time."[26]

Waraqa was in a state of constant waiting, often asking himself, "When?" and anticipating the day that this Prophet would come. He often wrote poetry about this expectation,

describing his disappointment at the delay in the Prophet's arrival.

Everything pointed to Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him; all that Waraqa had heard till now, all that Mecca had witnessed, and what Maysara had said—all of these had a common path, and they all pointed toward Muhammad the Trustworthy. Khadija no longer had any doubt. The long-awaited Prophet she had expected for years was now very close to her. She had not had in mind to marry again; however, she could not think of any way to get closer to him other than marriage.

THE WEDDING

She had married twice before and had since closed the door to all proposals, for she was of a mature age, and she did not need the assistance of anyone else for her livelyhood. In today's terms, she would be called an international businesswoman; she had many people working for her in different countries—in the Roman and Persian Empires as well as the Gassasina, Hira, and Damascus regions.

She was wealthy; she was a capable, smart, attractive, mature woman whom everyone held in high regard. In those days, there was no man who would not have wished to marry such a person, had they but the means or the power. Only God knows how many people came to her door with such proposals and how many times she closed the door of marriage never intending to open it again.

In fact, Amr ibn Hisham, who would later find fame as *Abu Jahl*, meaning Father of Folly, was among the men who had proposed to her. But Khadija had also refused him without hesitation. Indeed, it is said that one of the reasons that Abu Jahl later set himself against the Prophet was that he married Khadija. When this marriage occurred, Abu Jahl, in hatred and revenge, would say to himself, "Could she not find anyone else other than the adoptee of Abu Talib, the orphan of the Quraysh?"

But this time, the situation was different. Khadija, who had not thought of marriage for so long had made up her

mind. However, she did not know how she was going to broach the topic.

Nafisa bint Munya, her close friend, sensed the change in her and one day asked, "What is happening to you? What is wrong, Khadija? I have known you for so long, but I have never seen you this preoccupied."

At first, Khadija was doubtful as to whether she should reveal her thoughts or not. For a while, she remained silent. However, there was no way that any good could come from her situation unless the first step was taken. So, she told her friend what was on her mind. First, she said, "O Nafisa! There is no doubt that I see a superiority in Muhammad, son of Abd Allah, that I have not seen before. He is honest, trustworthy, honorable, and pure. He is the best person that one could hope to meet. On top of all this, there is good and surprising news concerning him. This is a strange situation! My heart nearly stopped when I heard what my servant, Maysara, told me, when I listened to what the priest had to say, and when I heard of the cloud that followed him on his return from Damascus. I believe that he is none other than the awaited Prophet!"

Nafisa was still trying to comprehend the situation: "Yes, but what has all this to do with the fact that you are in deep thought night and day?"

Khadija realized that she had to talk more openly. She turned to her friend and said, "I hope to make our paths meet through marriage, but I do not know how to go about this."

This time, the matter was understood. Nafisa said, "If you allow me, I will discover more about the situation for you."

This was the answer that Khadija had been waiting for. Delighted, she said, "If you can, Nafisa, do this straight away!"

Before long, Nafisa left her side to go and find Muhammad's home. After a while, she found Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. First, she greeted him, and then she began, "O Muhammad! What stops you from marrying? Why do you not marry?"

This was a question that he was not expecting. He answered, "I do not have the means to marry." He was referring to the financial means to marry. A person who would take on the responsibilities of marriage had to have the means to provide for a family.

Nafisa told him that this did not matter. While things like money and property were commodities that could easily be lost, things like honor, integrity, fidelity, and character were not so easily lost.

While the door was ajar, she did not want it to close. So, she added, "Suppose that was no longer a problem for you, and there was someone equal to you in goodness, property and honor, would you give a favorable reply?"

She was pointing to the fact that there was such a candidate, and he asked her, "Who is this person?"

Nafisa answered, "Khadija." It was impossible for him not to know her. He had taken her caravan to Damascus and, after having successfully conducted her business, handed it back to her only a few days ago. However, marriage was not as easy as business. And that is why he asked, "How could this be?"

Nafisa was not worried about how this could be. She only wanted an acceptance, and this sentence was a sign of that acceptance. So, as soon as she heard this, she could stop holding her breath. This reaction meant essentially, "There is no problem from my side, but how could this marriage be?"

From here, things were easy for Nafisa. Thus, she said to him, "Leave it up to me. I will take care of it."

Silence indicated his acceptance, and Nafisa quickly left his side, wanting to give the good news to Khadija herself.

As one might expect, in that day, it was not a standard social practice for a woman to be the one to propose marriage to a man. Normally, the leaders of the tribe would take on the responsibility of setting the stage for the candidates to marry and build a home together.

The news Nafisa brought made Khadija sigh with relief. Hearing that he looked on the proposal favorably, she sent him a message concerning the next step: the conditions of marriage. She wrote, "O Muhammad! There is no doubt that I am asking to marry you because of our shared lineage, your incomparable place in our tribe, your good ethics and loyalty, and your trustworthiness and honesty. Tell your uncles to step in to finalize the matter."

It was obvious that these words spelled out her admiration in a genuine way. However, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, did not want to decide on such an important matter without consulting his elders. After receiving the proposal, he went next to his uncle Abu Talib and told him of what Nafisa had said and the proposal that had followed.

Abu Talib greatly valued his nephew Muhammad, and he knew no other of such value. Yet, Khadija was also not a woman that one could disregard. She had led a life filled with honor and dignity. In terms of lineage and honor, she was among the very best. He also sensed that his nephew looked at this favorably, and he saw no reason not to give permission to go ahead.

The time had come for the happy union that would continue into the years ahead. Before long, Abdul Muttalib's sons,

Abu Talib, Abbas, and Hamza, would set out to ask officially for Khadija's hand in marriage. Even though the parties had said yes the proper ceremonies needed to be held among the families, and the union would need to be publicly announced. Abu Talib began, "All praise is due to God Who has made us from the lineage of Abraham and Ishmael. There is no doubt that it is He Who has enabled us to be of service to humanity, honored and entrusted us with the privilege of looking after the Sacred House, and allowed us to become leaders of this community."

The style and tone of this address indicated the seriousness of the ceremony and their sincere gratefulness to God. Afterwards, he said to the family gathering, "When it comes to my brother's son, Muhammad, son of Abd Allah, he is above all comparison. Although he may not have financial means and property, he is above everyone else in terms of honor, dignity, bravery, courage, intellect, and virtue. Wealth is a vanishing shadow; we are entrusted with it for a time—it is not everlasting but rather, a fickle thing. Yet, the news of that which is about to be granted to him will only increase the admiration of others for him. He requests your daughter Khadija from you. As for his dowry, he will be giving five hundred dirhams–half to be presented beforehand, and the other half at a later date."[27]

In response to the request of the groom's family, the bride's family had a few words to say. After Abu Talib, Khadija's uncle Amr ibn Asad[28] stood up and spoke of Khadija's virtues. On that day, Khadija did not have a father present either; her father had died in the Fijar wars, and like the Prophet, she had grown up as an orphan. This is what her uncle said:

"All praise is due to God Who has made us just as you have mentioned, and preferred us over those whom you have indicated, for we, indeed, are the foremost among the

Arabs, and so are you. None could deny your virtue among the Arabs. With you as my witnesses, O people of Quraysh, on the honorable name that we both share, I hereby wed Khadija, daughter of Khuwaylid, to Muhammad, son of Abd Allah, and accept the amount mentioned as dowry."

Abu Talib, who felt responsible for this duty, wanted to hear approval from the other relatives that were present. Therefore, he said, "I also want the other uncles to take part in this." Upon this, one of the other uncles who were present spoke up and said, "O Quraysh, witness, too, that we wed Muhammad, son of Abd Allah, to Khadija, daughter of Khuwaylid," confirming the judgment that was previously mentioned.[29]

The appropriate ceremonies had been completed and it was time to celebrate. Before long, the sheep and camel were slaughtered, and the wedding celebrations began.

The rich and noble Khadija was the world's happiest woman. As much as she tried to contain herself, her happiness was obvious. She had opened the doors wide to all her friends and family to celebrate this. Khadija's house was joyful and merry in every way that day. Tambourines were played, and the women danced among themselves with joy.

Of course, it was not only Abu Talib who was happy for his nephew; the Meccans had approved of this marriage so heartily that they expressed their feelings in poetry, declaring what an excellent match indeed this was.

However, no one else's bliss could compare with that of Khadija. She had investigated her husband's life so closely that she had invited his wet-nurse, Halima as-Sadiya, to their wedding, so the woman could rejoice at the happiness of the orphan child she once had nursed.

Khadija's elation did not overshadow her generosity or let her forget her sense of duty. When she left in the morn-

ing, Halima had with her forty sheep given to her by Khadija to thank her for the milk she had given Muhammad, son of Abd Allah.

That day, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was twenty-five years old. This was the beginning of twenty-five years of marriage that would be peaceful, despite the difficulties they would face together.

After staying in Abu Talib's house for a few days, they would move into a house purchased from Hakim ibn Hizam and live an exemplary life there for fifteen years, before the revelations begin.

Khadija, unlike other rich people, did not leave the housework to servants and hired people. Instead, she preferred to look after the needs of her husband herself, and she did so dutifully. She was so devoted to his happiness that she was sensitive to even the slightest discomfort on his part and zealously tried to prevent it.

The entry to Khadija al-Kubra's house

THE HOUSEHOLD

Khadija and Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, were not alone in the house that they shared. Actually, the parents of both had passed away and could not be there to see their happiness or visit them in their earthly home. Yet, the fact that someone's parents have died does not mean that they cannot have other people living with them. For it is the duty of people who have dedicated themselves to humanity, of everyone who has a sense of responsibility, to take care of those who are lonely, needy, and poor.

Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and Khadija were such people; they took this responsibility very seriously. It is because of this that their house was not only theirs, but the doors were open to all. They were, in fact, rising to the highest level of humanity through their generosity in sharing their house with those close to them.

It is worth briefly mentioning those who shared this peaceful family environment with them.

Out of loyalty and support in the difficult times of famine, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, asked his uncle Abbas to take care of one of Abu Talib's sons, and he himself took in Ali ibn Abu Talib, the other son. In doing so, he was able to show his gratitude to his uncle Abu Talib for taking him under his wing years before. Khadija, then, was the one who assumed the role of mother to Ali in his new home.

Ali was, on the one hand, under the educational instruction of the most noble of persons, and on the other, he was benefiting from Khadija's kindness and grace.

Zayd ibn Haritha also lived there. This youth was, in fact, the son of a free family, but was captured as a boy and brought to the slave market to be sold. Hakim ibn Hizam, the nephew of Khadija, bought him from the Ukaz fair and brought him to her. Zayd continued serving Khadija until she entered matrimony with Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. She then assigned him to the service of her husband after the marriage. Zayd would later be adopted as a son by the couple, as he refused to leave them. In fact, years later, when his uncle and father came all the way to Mecca to take him away, he chose to stay with the Prophet in peace instead of returning with his parents.

Umm Ayman, the person Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, called "my second mother," and his nanny from his father's time, was also among the inhabitants of this house.

Khadija gave birth by her first husband, Abu Hala, to a son, Hind, who was brought up under the guidance of the Prophet in this blessed house.

At one stage, Zubayr ibn Awwam would be blessed with the opportunity of growing up in this house, after the death of his father, Awwam. Perhaps it is because of this direct training from the Prophet that he was among the first to become Muslim, and was the first to raise arms to protect the Messenger and the faith of Islam.

A HOME FULL OF PEACE

In a house such as that, there is always peace and tranquillity. Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was a source of peace on his own. The purpose of his very existence was to shower a rain of peace upon those who had never seen peace even in their dreams.

Khadija's compassionate tenderness was also one of the important elements that nourished this peace. She was always pleased by his actions and employed haste to do as he wished. Whenever Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was faced with a situation that frustrated him, he would find peace and comfort at home with Khadija.

This peace between them was complemented by an enviable closeness, unconditional commitment, and an unfaltering sense of security. In fact, this sincerity that they shared with each other attracted the attention of others and caused them to look at their life with admiration because it was something they had not seen before. One day, Abu Talib sent Nab'a, his servant, to see how his nephew, Muhammad was being treated. On her return, Nab'a told Abu Talib, "What I saw was very interesting. When she saw Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, arrive, Khadija went to the door, welcomed her husband and held his hand, saying to her husband, 'I would sacrifice my parents for you. I know I would not do this for anyone else but you. I know that you are the

awaited Prophet. When you see those days, please do not forget me or my place in your heart. Please pray for me to God who has sent you!'"

When Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, heard these touching words from his wife and constant supporter, he told Khadija, "May God be my witness that if I am that person, I will never forsake you because you have made many a sacrifice for me,"[30] and indeed he never would forget her.

THE FRUITS OF THE BLESSED MARRIAGE

It was not long before this family started bearing fruit. First, Qasim was born. Sadly, he was not to stay long in this world. He had just begun to crawl and walk before he flew off to heaven.

Zaynab was the first of their daughters. She would marry Abu al-As ibn al-Rabia, under the guidance of Khadija, and she would bring the family two grandchildren, Umama and Ali.

Ruqayya and Umm Kulthum were born next. When they grew up, their father married them to Abu Lahab's sons, Utba and Utayba. Their marriages would last till the first years of Islam's spread, but would then be among the casualties of the Quraysh's hatred and antagonism. Ruqayya later married Uthman ibn Affan. On the first migration that took place to Abyssinia (present-day Ethiopia), Ruqayya and Uthman were the first family to migrate. Thus, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, would reward and compliment them by referring to them as the first family to migrate after Prophet Lot's family.

Later on, when Uthman and Ruqayya returned from Abyssinia, they migrated to Medina together. Ruqayya fell ill before the Battle of Badr and died soon after. God's Messenger left her husband, Uthman, in Medina to care for her, giving him the assurance that "You have rewards just like all those that go out to fight at Badr."[31]

After the death of Ruqayya, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, married Uthman to Umm Kulthum. However, Umm Kulthum was not to live for long either. She joined Ruqayya and her mother, Khadija, when she died nine years after their emigration to Medina.

In a way, fate had protected Khadija from seeing the death of her daughters. She was deeply distressed at the marriage breakdown of her daughters; perhaps her broken heart was spared having to witness their deaths in Medina and the tragic fate of helplessly standing by them in their painful last moments.

Blessed Uthman would later be named "*Dhun-Nurayn*" or "He of Two Lights," having wed both the Prophet's daughters, one after the other. He would be the only one with this title among the Companions.

Fatima came into the world five years before the revelations began. Despite her young age, she experienced the violence of Mecca in the initial years, and God knows what she suffered in the three years of the boycott when the nonbelievers refused to have any social relations, business dealings, or visits, even verbal contacts with the fledgling Muslim community.

When she grew up, she was wed to Ali and from this union Hasan and Husayn, who would continue the pure lineage of the Prophet, were born.

At a later time, Ali wanted permission to marry a second wife, as was common in those days; he thought to marry Abu Jahl's daughter. How could the daughter of the Prophet and the daughter of the chief of the disbelievers, a sworn enemy of the Prophet be married to the same man? The Prophet said, "Undoubtedly the sons of Hisham are requesting that I grant permission for them to marry their daughter to Ali, son of

Abu Talib. I will never grant my permission." He repeated this three times. He later went on to say, "By God, it is only after Abu Talib's son divorces my daughter that he would be able to marry the daughter of Abu Jahl. My daughter is a part of me, and all that makes her happy makes me happy. All that upsets her makes me upset."[32]

After receiving such a reaction from Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, Ali not only forgot about marrying the daughter of Abu Jahl, who maintained a relentless hostility toward the Muslims, but from that day forward he did not think of marrying any other, choosing to stay married to Fatima alone till her death. After her death, he would marry Umama, daughter of Fatima's eldest sister, Zaynab, as Fatima had directed him to do, ensuring that her children were well taken care of.

Since Abd Allah was born in this house after the revelations came, he was also called *Tahir* and *Tayyib* (the Clean and the Pure). However, Abd Allah soon closed his eyes to this world, going to the next as an infant.

PREMONITIONS OF THE DIVINE MESSAGE

Before Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, began to receive divine revelations, that holy house was blessed with dreams from the spiritual dimension, and Khadija was privy to many such dreams. These were premonitions of the revelations; and six months before the revelations came, they became more prominently prophetic. Perhaps these were a form of preparation for the revelations to come.

The dreams that were visited on him he shared with Khadija, whereupon she would interpret them in the light of the expectations that had taken root and bloomed in her soul, using each dream as an uplifting spiritual opportunity. On one occasion, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, saw in a dream that one of the wooden pieces of the roof had been removed and a hole had appeared. Then, a silver staircase was lowered through this hole and two men descended into the house on it. He wanted to call someone for help but he could neither find anyone nor speak. Then, the two men sat on either side of him. One of them took hold of him, reached into his body and took out two of his rib bones. Then, he went for his heart, taking it out and holding it in his hand. This dream felt so real that it was as if he could feel the man's hands on his heart. The man was saying to his friend, "What a good heart this upright man has." Then he cleaned the heart and put it back to its place. He also returned the ribs to their place. The men went back the same way they had come—they went up the stairs and disappeared. They took the staircase with them

as they went. The roof was also in its previous shape, and all was back to normal.

Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, of course, told Khadija of his dream first. Khadija, his greatest support during those critical times, gave the encouragement he expected, saying, "Good tidings be to you!" and adding, "There is no doubt that God only wants what is best and good for you. This, too, will prove good. Good tidings upon you!"[33]

In addition to all this, each living thing, each tree, and each rock kept greeting the future Prophet. On a day when he had such an experience, he would relate his anxiety to Khadija, in their house of peace. As always, he found her courageous support ready.

"There is no doubt that God will not forsake you and will not allow anything bad to happen to you," she said, "because you tell the truth in all your words, you are trustworthy with all that is entrusted to you, and you take care of those close to you."[34]

Fatima az-Zahra's mantle
Topkapi Palace Museum, Inventory no. 21/459

THE COMING OF THE ARCHANGEL

Peace ruled in the home of Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. The development of that holy environment and the dreams he received were preparing him for Divine revelations. Yet, on the other hand, the darkness of ignorance was growing darker. The four corners of the Ka'ba were filled with idols; people had forgotten their Lord, the Creator of the Universe, and instead hastened to worship these false and illusory idols. It was obvious that this situation was deeply disturbing to the pure spirit of Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. The Ka'ba had been the first place of worship erected to bring peace to humanity, but now it was like the center of gloom. Although he could not separate himself from the Ka'ba, he felt a growing need to distance himself from that oppressive darkness.

He made a habit of going away. He would walk for hours to the *Jabal an-Nur*, the Mount of Light, and it was as though both man and mountain were waiting for the true Light to come down from the heavens. He would retreat to the mountain-top cave on the Mount of Light, from which he could see the Ka'ba, thinking of its pure future, when real faith would be restored, finding a little consolation in the dream of it. Thus, he would usually seclude himself from the city on this mountain where he preferred to be with his Lord on

certain days and months of the year. The peace he felt there when he engaged in deep reflection was indescribable.

Each one of these journeys meant a separation for Khadija. Her husband found a special sense of peace at the cave of Hira, but on each occasion Khadija would be fearful that something would happen to him. That is why each time she would send her men after him, making sure that they protected him in case of any danger.

Usually, he would leave with supplies that Khadija had prepared for him, and there would be times when he would return to stock up again. There would be other times when Khadija could not endure the separation, and she would take the long road to bring him provisions herself, walking for miles and climbing the 860-meter Mount of Light to her husband, who had given himself to reflection. Together, they would breathe in the mysterious air of Hira, and she counted it as a tremendous blessing to be able to share these moments with him. Then, there would be other times when they would meet at what is known today as the Ijaba Masjid, spend the night there, and separate again the next day, the Prophet going back to the mountain, and Khadija back home.

For a woman to be away from her husband for this long was not something to be easily endured; however, Khadija did not show the slightest negative reaction to these separations, instead sharing in the solitude of the Prophet, encouraging him in the names of the days yet to come.

One day, while he was in deep reflection on the mountain, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, heard someone say, "O Muhammad, I am Gabriel!"

Perhaps this was further preparation for what was coming. The Prophet, shaken by this experience, came and sought

refuge in the secure and safe world of Khadija, explaining to her what he had heard. And in a tone of voice that penetrated the heart, he said, "I swear by God that I am anxious that great things are about to happen..."

As a person of strength, she reacted just as she had on previous occasions. She uttered the following words, which relieved all his sorrows and pain:

"What words do you speak? We seek refuge in God! Would God forsake you for you never neglect that which is entrusted to you, maintain your ties with those of your kin, and always tell the truth?"[35]

Then, back on the mountain, it happened again. It was night time, and all had retired to their homes. The deep silence everywhere was broken by Gabriel's voice. It said, "Peace be with you!"

He hurried to the bosom of safety. When Khadija saw him like this, she asked, "What is the matter? Did something happen?"

He told his wife about all that he had experienced. As soon as he finished, she said excitedly, "Good tidings be to you because peaceful greetings can only signify good."[36] Courage and strength could be felt in her excitement. In saying this, she meant that whoever greeted him in such a way would only bring him good, and she was to be proved right.

The courtyard of the Grand Mosque where the Ka'ba stands with the Mount of Light in the distance

Prophet Muhammad started to receive the Revelation after a long period of solitude and devotion in the cave of Hira on top of this mountain whose peak slopes slightly toward Mecca as if bowing to the Ka'ba in humility.

THE FIRST REVELATION

Just as she had said, one day, on the Mount of Light, the light of Revelation descended, creating an unbreakable bond between the heavens and the earth. Gabriel came and delivered to Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the first messages from God, which had been predicted by so many signs. The radiance of heaven had been bestowed on the light of the earth, and Muhammad's prophetic mission was about to start.

The heavenly radiance, a presence he felt strongly, embraced him and pulled him towards its bosom with the word, "Read!" Thus was placed on the Prophet's shoulders the responsibility that the mountains and rocks had refused before time began. The heaviness he felt, due to the greatness of this duty, was unbearable.

Thus was revealed the first recitation of the Qur'an. Then the Prophet was released, and he rushed back towards Mecca.

Strangely, every tree and rock that he met bowed in his presence and greeted him openly saying, "May God's peace be upon you, O Messenger!"[37]

The Prophet returned home agitated and tearful. He asked his loyal wife to cover him with a blanket and said, "I am frightened of myself," expressing his anxiety at the beginning of a new stage whose results he could not know.

Even though she could sense the difference in him, Khadija felt relieved at his arrival. This time his absence had been long and the men she had sent after him had returned empty-handed. She had worried that something had happened to him, but on seeing him she was able to put her worries behind her. However, he had never come home like this before. His wife, the source of his consolation, reassured him as she always had, saying, "Do not fear at all! God will not do anything to bring you harm!" After listening to his story, she told him that the incident he had experienced was a source of good news rather than something to be afraid of.

What great strength she displayed! There was no doubt that her trust and belief in God was unshakeable, and this was a sign of her exceptional discernment. How many other people, men or women, would ever be capable of responding to such a situation with her determination and strength of mind?

Khadija was the first to hear God's Messenger relay what he had experienced. She was a woman of wisdom, strength, and patience, together with complete and firm acceptance of God's will. She was sure that Muhammad the Trustworthy, in whom others sought security, could rely on his Maker, and she knew that he would not be forsaken. She summoned the strength that he sought from her; she was not going to leave the Pride of Humanity lonely at a time like this. So, she said, "Good tidings, O Muhammad! Persevere and be steadfast! By Him in Whose hand is my soul, I believe that you are the Prophet of this nation."

There was no doubt in her: she had been waiting for this. There and then, she declared her faith in him and all that was revealed to him. She was conscious of the fact that she was

there to support him. There was no reason, she assured him, for one who had always pursued righteousness to suffer such anxiety on the road to perfection. She continued,

"Do not fear! God will undoubtedly protect you. You give support to your relatives, and help and clothe those in need. You are always a generous host. You are on the path of the Truth, and you have totally devoted yourself to all that is good."

Those who have dedicated themselves to live for others would naturally be under the protection of the Owner of the Universe. Of course, God would not forsake one who behaves like this. For this is the path He wishes us to follow. How could the Prophet be left alone by the Creator when he was trying to care for the creation, to fill the emptiness of society?

In encouraging and uplifting him, Khadija was displaying an attitude that is an example to all Muslims and revealing the characteristics which would elevate her to the most revered of places. Yes, God would never leave alone in desperate times those who are seeking to follow Him. But in the midst of fear and uncertainty, to be able to say this, one has to have the fortitude of Khadija!

Khadija went straight to Waraqa after this conversation. She was not surprised at what she had heard; it was as if she was displaying the strength of someone who had expected all that was happening. She told Waraqa what her husband had told her. Every single word fell like thunder on Waraqa's ears; when he could not contain himself any further, he exclaimed, "Holy! Holy!" adding, "By Him in Whose hand is Waraqa's soul, if what you have said is true, O Khadija, there has come to him the greatest *Namus* (i.e. the angel who is entrusted with Divine Secrets) who came to Moses and Jesus, and he is undoubtedly this nation's Prophet. Go and tell him this, and tell him to be steadfast!"

It was obvious that in the darkness of this time, the Mount of Light had begun to radiate light from its skirts. This was the birth of a light that would turn night into day and of a fire that would never be extinguished. Out of the seed had sprung a sapling which had now broken the soil. The awaited moment had finally come.

This incident would change the course of humanity, and Waraqa wanted to hear about it firsthand, so with Khadija's assistance, they all came together. The old Waraqa kissed the Prophet on the forehead with respect, as the age difference was not an impediment to obedience to the awaited Prophet. Then, Waraqa began to listen to Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, tell what had happened, from the beginning.

As he listened, this old man went from one state to another, experiencing different emotions and excitement. He had noticed long ago that this was the man who would bring the good tidings, whom he had read about and whom he had been awaiting eagerly for years. After the Prophet finished, Waraqa uttered these historic words:

"I wish I had been young this day, and that I could live to see the day that your people will cast you out, so that I could support you on that day."

These were indeed unexpected words from the house where he had gone for support. Yes, the future was full of hope, but it seemed that this hope was not to be obtained easily. Considering what he had heard, the Prophet asked Waraqa wonderingly, "Are my people going to drive me out?"

The answer that came referred not only to him but to all those cast out for the same reason. "Yes, they will cast you out. For there is not a single person who has come with the Truth that you bear and not been driven out of his homeland."[38]

THE FIRST MUSLIM

Thus it was that Khadija, who was known as *Tahira*, "the Pure One," even in the Age of Ignorance, declared her faith to the Prophet and became the first Muslim. According to Ibn Abbas, the Prophet performed his prayer with prostrations on a Monday. On the same day, in the evening, he again stood for prayer, and this time, he led someone who stood behind him: this was none other than Khadija.[39]

The Prophet taught her the ritual ablution to be made before prayer and all the positions of Muslim prayer that Gabriel had taught him—the form of what would become the five daily prayers in later years—so she took the first lesson from the Prophet himself and performed the first prayer together with him. She had seen him as her leader even before his Prophethood, and acted accordingly. It was impossible to measure this reverence after he received the revelation.

The first revelation to the Prophet had come in a time when the world had fallen into ignorance. But dark souls who had united with this darkness would rage against the Light, as it ever has been.

Khadija was like a loyal deputy next to him; whenever she would encounter frustrating or difficult events, she would come and find solace in his presence. She was with him as

much as possible, and she worked to get rid of anything that was an obstacle in his way.

The road would be arduous and being the 'first' in this regard was, of course, very difficult. However, there was 'reward in proportion to love'; this means the suffering endured is not in vain, and God tests His servants by different means because He loves them. For those who are patient throughout these tests, He raises the veil of His blessings, giving them various gifts. Surely, He keeps this promise, and those who have endured all these tests for God's sake, without deviating from His service, have reaped the eternal benefits of their endurance.

Indeed, the worst types of pain and suffering have been visited on the Prophets, God's most beloved creatures—and then, to those who have given themselves to the service of God, according to their degrees. Through this, He subjects His creatures to difficult preparation for the great task of representing the True Path. In other words, as bad as they may seem, all troubles and trials are, in fact, cleansing and help us to develop. Thus, the distressing things that happen in this world are not merely sources of pain for people, but are actually God's mercy to the believers.

In the first days of Islam, the Quraysh—the powerful tribe who thought they stood to lose the most—opposed the development of Islam in an insidious manner, exerting community pressure on the Prophet and Khadija, with the aim of hurting and undermining them. For this reason, their sons-in-law were greatly pressured to divorce the three daughters whom they had married before the revelations came, and these men were promised now that the tribe would provide them with any other girl they wanted to marry. As previous-

ly mentioned, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and Khadija's daughters, Ruqayya and Umm Kulthum, were married to Abu Lahab's sons, Utba and Utayba. Utba and Utayba did not have the characters to be able to withstand these pressures, and as soon as they were guaranteed that they could marry any girl, they left Ruqayya and Umm Kulthum. The failure of these marriages was a terrible source of sorrow for Khadija.

The Prophet and his wife were confronted with not one but two daughters' broken marriages. There did not seem a valid reason for this to happen; the only cause was that both of them were targeted because they happened to be the Prophet's daughters.

Only Abu al-As ibn al-Rabia, Zaynab's husband, did not bow to the pressure and stayed by her side. He was living an honorable life, made his own decisions, and was not of a character that would allow others to interfere in his affairs. If there was a matter at hand, he would decide what to do and determine the right course of action. According to him, if there was peace in the house, no outside force should be able to affect this. Theirs was a peaceful home, and his wife having differing ideas did not change this peace; in fact, it made it better.

The messages had just begun; the Qur'an would be revealed one piece at a time over the next twenty-three years. God's Messenger would prove successful in the end. However, this would unfold in time, and it was not possible to see the end straight away. It required an unbreakable faith and surrender to believe in this. While, in truth, God was behind him, on the surface, it seemed that Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was on his own.

More and more, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, became a target. The Quraysh increased the pressure on him; they would put thorny branches in his path and throw stones at him. Just as all those who have called people to the Light have had to face opposition and resistance, so, too, did he suffer attempts to silence him.

In those days, admitting, "I believe in Muhammad's message," meant inviting on oneself trouble and suffering. The believers could never be sure that they would arrive home safely after going out in the morning, or that when they went to bed, they would reach daylight in safety. Swords were sharpened in hatred, and people were beheaded in anger. Each believing home was blacklisted, and each individual became a potential target for the non-believers, who ostracized them and forced them into concealment.

It took a unique sense of courage to stand with the believers at a time like this. The uniqueness of those who became Muslims under these hostile circumstances was, in fact, confirmed by God Himself in the Revelation. They were given a different 'rank,' for it is obvious that those who placed their lives and their property on the line before seeing the beautiful time of Islam's ascendancy were different from those who accepted it later on, after it had grown and bloomed.[40] Of course, even though these pioneers will always have an elevated position, those who have followed them will also be rewarded from the Divine Bounty. Still, being one of the first had a special meaning. Surely, it was this distinction which also led the Prophet to honor Abu Bakr Siddiq over Umar ibn Khattab,[41] and Abdal Rahman ibn Awf as opposed to Khalid ibn Walid.[42] It was not possible to forget the loyalty, even to death, displayed by these followers at a time when

everyone else opposed him. Thus, God and His Prophet accorded the 'firsts' their due rights and recognition.

And when it comes to the first of the first, it was undoubtedly Khadija. She was the first love, first wife, first apple of his eye—and the first to believe after the visitation at the Mount of Light. She was the first to take ablutions as Gabriel had taught the Prophet, and the first to perform the daily prayers with the Prophet, for he went straight to her after learning these rituals from the Archangel. And she was, again, the first to follow his lead as *imam* in congregational prayers.[43]

In fact, the word 'Khadija' means 'one that is born early.' In her personality we see how this meaning is extremely apt; she was so far ahead that it was impossible to surpass her and her virtues. She was the first star born in the Age of Happiness and the first rose of the first days. This was such an enviable position that Afif ibn Umar would years later express his sadness at having missed the opportunity to imitate her:

"I was a trader in the Age of Ignorance (before Muhammad's prophethood). One day I went to visit Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib. When I had arrived in Mina, we saw a man enter the town. First, he looked at the sun, and when he saw that it was about to set he started to perform his prayers. Then, a lady came and started to perform her prayer behind him, and finally, a teenager came and he too started to pray.

"I asked Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib, 'Who is this, O Abbas?' He answered, 'This is Abd Allah's son, grandson of Abdul Muttalib.' He continued, 'He is also my brother's son. He is saying that he is the Prophet. There is no one that believes in him except this lady and this youth. But he claims that soon he will be given from the treasures of kings of Egypt and Persia.'

"Then I asked him, 'So who is the woman?' And he replied, 'This woman is his wife, Khadija bint Khuwaylid.'

"Again I asked, 'What about this boy?' to which he replied calmly, 'The child is his uncle's son, Ali ibn Abu Talib.'

"When I asked him what they were doing, he replied, 'They are performing prayer.'"[44]

Afif ibn Umar went on to explain, with the greatest regret, what really upset him about this story: "How I wish I had been a Muslim then, to be the fourth person performing the prayer on that day!"[45]

THE CHERISHED MEMORY

Khadija, in addition to being first among the forerunners of the faith, was unfailingly loyal, until her dying day. How could such loyalty be forgotten? Years later, Aisha—another model of loyalty—spoke of how Khadija's memory was always cherished by her husband:

"Even though I never met her, I have not been so jealous of the Prophet's affections toward any other woman as I am of Khadija. He mentions her often and holds her in such high regard that whenever he slaughters a sheep and divides it into pieces, he still sends Khadija's friends their portion."[46]

This was because he loved whom she loved, and those who love never forget their loved ones. He would not falter in his respect toward her relatives; he would give them the cushion he was sitting on, and when asked why, he would say, "I also love the ones she loved."[47]

One one occasion God's Messenger heard that Hala bint Khuwaylid, Khadija's sister, was at the door of the house, asking to come in. Her voice and the manner in which she asked to enter was so much like Khadija's that he was very moved and stood up quickly, saying enthusiastically, "By God, it is Hala, daughter of Khuwaylid!"

Aisha, upon witnessing this excitement, became jealous and interfered, questioning why such attention should be given to someone who had died years ago. This was her way

of saying that God had bestowed more virtues on herself than on his first wife, and that she found this type of affection excessive. Perhaps this was not coincidence, and God wanted her to hear of Khadija's virtues from the Prophet's mouth. He implied that he was not happy with what he had heard, saying, "Was there any other like her?" and continued, "I swear by God that He has not given me anyone as beneficent as she. When people denied me, she believed in me; she affirmed me when people labeled me a liar; when people deprived me, she supported me from her property; and God gave me children through her." He wanted Aisha to understand that her reaction was not appropriate and that he would not allow anyone to tarnish her memory by speaking ill of her.

His intentions were clear and Aisha immediately asked for forgiveness, promising that she would not say anything negative about Khadija ever again.[48]

EXCHANGES WITH THE ANGEL

From the time of the Damascus journey to the time that he returned as God's Messenger from the Mount of Light with the first revelation, Khadija meticulously cared for her husband. When, from time to time, he would tire of Mecca and head for the lonely places in the wilderness, she would follow him, considering it a good deed to accompany him. When she stayed in Mecca and his return was delayed, she would get some supplies and take them to God's Messenger in the high mountains.

On a day like this, she met Gabriel in human form. A stranger she had not seen before asked her about the Last Messenger. She got very worried that this stranger could be someone that wanted to harm her husband. When she arrived and recounted the meeting to the Prophet, however, she was met with his sweet smile. When the Prophet told her that the person she had seen was Gabriel, she was relieved.

While the leadership of Mecca had officially declared opposition to the Prophet, Khadija was his constant supporter and source of help. When they wanted to make him lose his sense of peace, he would find solace next to her; and when they made attempts on his life, he would find security next to her. From time to time, she used her intelligence to find inventive ways to support him. For instance, once she wanted to prove wrong some ignorant people who asserted that the one who came to him was the devil and not an angel. So, she said to her husband, "Cousin! When Gabriel comes

to you again, will you let me know?" He accepted, and the next time Gabriel came, the Prophet called Khadija to him.

He said, "Gabriel is here; he is next to me." Khadija did not waste any time. She ran up to the Prophet and made a request: she wanted him to sit on her knee. The Prophet was not going to hurt her feelings by denying her. When he had done so, she asked him, "Do you see (Gabriel)?" to which she received a favorable reply. She asked him to sit on her other knee, then on her lap, always asking, "Do you still see him?" And each time she would receive confirmation. Then she took off her head covering and drew him close to her bosom, and asked, "Do you see him now?" But this time he said no.

Now she had proven her point. Khadija said, "May good tidings be to you! Be assured: I swear by God that this is an angel and not the devil. If it had been the devil, it would not have felt shame and left us."[49]

Yet another day, she was on her way to take food and drink to her beloved, as we have previously mentioned. At that time, Gabriel was with the Prophet. As she drew near, he turned to the Prophet and said, "That is Khadija coming, bearing food and drink. When she comes to you, tell her that her Lord greets her, and convey my greeting, too, to her. At the same time, give her good tidings that she will be granted a castle made of pearls in Heaven, where there is neither disturbance nor fatigue."

When she arrived and he mentioned the holy greetings brought by Gabriel, she did not change her attitude, and with the same sense of nobility, she replied, "God is Peace, and He is the source of all peace! May God's peace and blessings be upon you, O Messenger of God. May peace be upon all who hear greetings except Satan. And may greetings be to Gabriel."[50]

FOLLOWING EVERY BREATH THE PROPHET TAKES

Khadija always followed every breath the Messenger took and felt the excitement of catching and acting upon his feelings. One day, she witnessed the Prophet treating Zayd, one of her servants, with care and special consideration, realizing the high merit in Zayd's character. She immediately made a gift of Zayd to her husband so that he would have a good servant.

When young, Zayd was carried off into slavery during a tribal war. It was a few years after Khadija's nephew had bought Zayd and given him to Khadija that Zayd's family found out where Zayd was and went to the Prophet to demand Zayd's return. The Prophet then called for Zayd and offered him a choice, "If you want, you can stay with us, but if you wish, you may go with your father."[51] Unhesitatingly, Zayd chose to stay with the Prophet, who freed and adopted Zayd as his son. Thus, Zayd preferred eternal freedom to the happiness and warmth of his family's home. Like Khadija, Zayd ibn Haritha was one of the pioneers who realized that the path to follow passed through this blessed house.

Undoubtedly, Khadija would always stand by her husband, sharing with him her inner beauty. She would be a source of consolation to him during times of strife. Through every outrage and persecution heaped upon him by the Quraysh, Khadija was his dearest companion and helper.[52]

THE PIONEER OF STRUGGLE

Khadija was rich, but wealth itself cannot provide peace or satisfy one's emotional needs. It gains value when it is earned and spent for a purpose, and what is more, this way it can be turned into everlasting treasure that illuminates the Hereafter. For this reason, Khadija wanted her life and wealth to become infinite, so she could spend them for the Prophet and his cause.

Especially after the return of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, from Hira, she put aside all personal desires and, instead, worked night and day helping him confront the disbelief of the Meccans. She would go door to door, hoping that at least one more heart could taste faith. Even though the non-believers would follow her every step, striving to undo any good that she had done, she was undeterred; whenever she saw two people together, she would join them and plead with them to save their eternal life through illuminating their hearts with faith.

One of the practical ways of doing this was to host people at dinner parties. Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, would also use this method. He would send Zayd ibn Haritha and Ali ibn Abi Talib, who were adolescents then, street by street to invite people for dinner, while Khadija would be at home cooking for those who would attend.

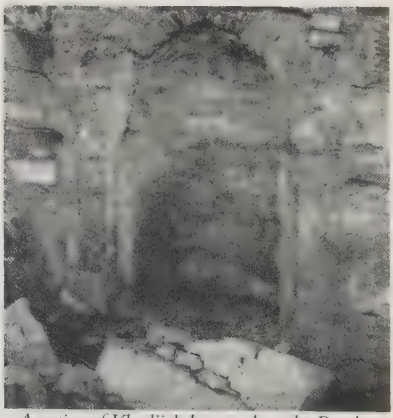
In order to be able to fill other hearts with the beauties of faith, she organized many such dinner gatherings, reached

out to those less fortunate, and sacrificed her vast wealth in the way of God. Only a few years after the Revelation came down at Hira, Khadija had nothing left of her property and was in a state of need.

She knew that even the most valuable of material goods could not be more important than one person coming into the ranks of the believers, and she acted accordingly. She was so generous that she believed it to be an honor to give all that she had, including her life, for the sake of what she believed in.

These sacrifices and her selfless acts made her merit incomparable, such that she was raised to the very highest rank among all the women of the world. One day, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was describing her virtue, and he pointed to the heaven and earth with his finger and stated, "Mary, mother of Jesus, is the best of the women of the heavens, and the worthiest woman of the earth (still alive) is Khadija, daughter of Khuwaylid."[53]

The Prophet stated that Khadija is one of the four most perfect of all women ever since the first human.[54]



A section of Khadija's house where the Prophet would pray and meet with visitors

THE BOYCOTT

As the number of people who believed increased, the Quraysh's hatred and vengefulness grew, for an enmity had begun. If they could have done so, they would have denied the believers even the air they breathed. They followed them constantly and looked for any opportunity to do them harm.

They were frustrated when the men they sent after those believers that fled to Abyssinia returned empty-handed. The expensive gifts they had prepared to bribe the Abyssinian leaders against the Muslims were returned untouched. On top of that, they received news that the Muslims had been granted asylum with rights to worship and read the Qur'an freely. They were frantic, outraged that the believers should be protected in other places outside Qurayshi control and allowed to pray and read the Qur'an as they wished.

As if that wasn't enough, when Umar ibn Khattab converted to Islam, it was the ultimate provocation in their eyes. They had already lost the likes of Hamza—so fierce that he was known as 'the Lion'—to the other side. They felt more and more threatened as things were developing in a way that made them fear losing all control.

Determined to get rid of the fledgling Muslim community, the Quraysh assembled and decided to inflict on it a deadly punishment. They agreed to expel all the Muslims from Mecca by severing all connections with them and ostracize them completely. No one would be allowed to trade with

them or marry any of their daughters or sons, and all their sources of food and water would be cut off.

Thus began a time filled with terrible ordeals. The one who suffered the most was Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as he had to watch his loved ones and followers being persecuted and abused. The hatred and animosity from those who ran the city had reached such a level that they could not tolerate the existence of the small band of believers and would not rest until they were 'cleansed' from the city. Mecca turned on the Muslims with all its might and began to suffocate them. Abu Jahl, in particular, became like a pharaoh of old, plotting these monstrous acts.

The plan was that they would exterminate Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and his believers by forcing them out of Mecca, so that they would die of hunger and thirst in the desert, without the need for blood feuds which could last for centuries.

That is why they decided to cut all ties and not allow anyone—including relatives—to help them, feed them, or marry them. This was comparable to the concentration camps of today: a slow, agonizing death for those branded 'outsiders.' The boycott meant the Muslims were cast out in the open in the silent, deadly conditions of the desert days and nights. This was a simple way to get rid of them without allowing anyone to come to their defense or cause a feud. What Waraqa had foretold was happening. It was impossible to resist, and they had to leave their homes and their city.

Once again, Abu Talib, Muhammad's uncle, was there to provide what protection he could. The Muslims formed a refugee camp of sorts outside Mecca, in a place called Shib Abi Talib. What served as their tents were no more than bits of material on sticks. It is worth noting the efforts of Abu Talib to help even though he was not Muslim.

Shib Abi Talib was an empty plot of land outside the city. This boycott became a three-year tribulation. Trouble multiplied, and each day laments were heard from the tents. There was constant grieving as people would leave Shib Abi Talib to die after falling prey to contagious diseases. The Meccans took pleasure in hearing these lamentations echoing in the distance.

Three long years of famine, thirst, and illnesses... What type of oppression was this that women, the elderly, children, and the ill were all treated with the same cruelty? No allowances were made for them under any circumstances.

The screams of starving children rose everywhere. Their cries were like daggers in the heart of their leader.

They all suffered so much hunger and pain, among them, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, who thanked God because he found a piece of leather, washed and ate it, and was able to stand up straight for a couple of days.[55] Most of them ate the leaves and bark of trees and meeting their needs like sheep.[56]

Khadija, once a wealthy woman, was now enduring these hardships with her husband. Both of them sorrowed all the more seeing the other's suffering; however, nothing could be done about it. The Quraysh had blockaded all the roads so that no one could come near them.

Khadija, in fact, would have been exempt from this boycott and deprivation if she had not insisted on staying with the Prophet, as she was not from the family of Hashemites. Had she wanted to, she could have lived comfortably instead of enduring this much agony. However, she had such strong faith and character that she would not leave him whom she believed, from the first day, to be God's Messenger. As she had shared joyful times with him, she had to be there in his days of sorrow; thus, she chose hunger and thirst over her

warm bed in Mecca. And he needed her support now more than ever.

Khadija was not the type that could sit and do nothing. While much of what she had owned was seized when the Muslims were thrown out, she knew the market, and she would get her nephew to deliver secretly to the camp whatever could be recovered from her property, thus feeding the hungry and clothing the bare. This nephew was Hakim ibn Hizam, who had not converted yet, but he so loved his aunt that he would make the dangerous journey at night to help meet the Muslims' needs. One day, he had intended to take a handful of wheat to them, but while doing so, he was noticed and stopped by Abu Jahl. How could one resist his authority? Abu Jahl could not bear that a different sound should come even from his brother. His reaction was harsh and merciless:

"Are you taking food to the Hashemites? I swear that I will imprison you before I see you take them food. I will ostracize you and ruin you in Mecca!"

While they were arguing, Abu al-Bakhtari came. He, too, was from the Hashemites. He had not accepted the faith but was a just and merciful person. He first tried to find out what the situation was and asked, "What is going on here?" Abu Jahl replied, "He has attempted to take food to the Hashemites."

On hearing this, Abu al-Bakhtari retorted, "So, he has food and wants to take it to his aunt, and you want to prevent him? Is that so?"

Then, he decided to stop this injustice and demanded, "Move out of his path!" A fight then broke out between him and Abu Jahl, who did not want to budge. Abu al-Bakhtari wounded Abu Jahl's head with a bone he found lying there, and this act would set in motion events which would result

in the eventual removal of the boycott agreement which was hung on the walls of the Ka'ba.[57]

It would come too late for many of the Muslims. Khadija was going through the deepest distress, for she and her husband had still more to endure. They had six children, of whom two were sons. The first boy, Qasim, who had just started crawling, passed away. Her heart was heavy with sorrow, tears flowing down her cheeks. However, her patience was born of the strength that could endure anything visited on the Prophet's household. Feeling a need for consolation, she went to speak to her husband: "O Messenger of God! Qasim's time has come. I wish his life had been longer so that he could have reached the age of weaning." He responded with tenderness, "He will finish his nursing years in heaven."

A paragon of strength, she was uplifted and said, "Had I known this, his death would have been more bearable for me." Then, the Prophet said, "If you wish, I can pray to God to make you hear his voice." Khadija, with extraordinary patience and resignation, said, "No (I need no proof); I accept what God and His Prophet have to say."[58]

Khadija was the first to believe and follow the Messenger of God. There was none, man or woman, who believed before her. Through her support, God eased Muhammad's load. Whenever a person would speak against him, contradict him, or make an attempt on his life, he would come and find solace in her presence. Her love and loyalty were stronger than the opposition and helped him forget all that concerned him. Nothing harmful or upsetting could come from her. On the contrary, every time he came to her, he would find consolation, and the clouds of misery disappeared one by one, leaving smiles in their place. But the time appointed for every mortal—the time to say farewell to this passing world—

was approaching for Khadija. Soon, she would return to Paradise and her Creator.

Sorrow was compounded with more sorrow. After Qasim, Abd Allah too left behind the suffering of this world and set sail towards the beauties of the Hereafter. Thus, on top of the years of deprivation came the blows of separation. As a mother, her most precious treasures in this world were the children she pressed to her bosom, and now they were dying, one after the other.

The time had come for Abu Talib ibn Abdul Muttalib, and he passed away as well. This was a great loss for the Prophet—his uncle had been like a tender father to him, his protector and guardian. Worse, Khadija could not even partake in the funeral and mourning, because she was close to death. Her deathbed was no more than a makeshift tent in exile. As hard as it would be for her to leave her beloved husband and her Prophet, it was time to die in the arms of this man for whom she had sacrificed all her wealth and life.

THE FAREWELL

Just three days had passed since Abu Talib's death. The Prophet had tried so hard to persuade his uncle to accept Islam before departing from this world, but had not heard a single utterance from him regarding belief. Further, the Quraysh would now be free to strengthen their attacks on Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, knowing that his protector was gone.

On top of all this, his greatest supporter—Khadija—was dying. He went to see his wife and companion, who was burning with fever.

He was already deeply distressed, having buried his uncle, his greatest advocate and protector, without hearing the proclamation of faith from his lips. He had wanted so much for him to believe, but Abu Talib had refused to affirm any acceptance of Islam. His other uncle, Abbas, would say, "O Messenger! I think I heard it," but he would indicate he had not by shaking his head.[59]

It was the darkest of nights. He left his dear wife on her sickbed and went to his tent worried and anxious. In addition to being deprived of a source of strength like Abu Talib, he was also losing his closest, most loyal friend, companion, and beloved.

He returned and opened the curtain of the tent. Khadija, who was moaning with pain, was indeed a heartbreaking sight.

It was obvious that the signs of separation were showing themselves. This was the end of the struggle with hunger and pain for Khadija. She, who used to be one of Mecca's richest women, was now departing from a starving community in exile.

In her deepening pain, there was also the worry of leaving God's Messenger behind. She was going, but her mind and heart were with the Prophet and the orphans she was leaving in his care. She was born early, awakened to the Truth early, and now, she was departing early.

There was a smile on her face before she left; it was obvious that Gabriel had brought good tidings of Paradise to her, and Paradise was before her eyes. However, even this smile turned into deep sorrow when she saw her husband watching her from the door of the tent with the greatest mercy and love. Each of them were sad for the other.

He was griefstricken at this scene. Several times, his sobs caught in his throat. Trembling, he drew near to her with gratitude and spoke, although words were incapable of expressing his feelings. He said, "You have suffered all this, Khadija, because of me. You lived a life deprived of what you deserved."

He was trying to say that such a great woman deserved a grand life according to her grace, but instead, she had chosen to undergo all kinds of difficulties with him. Then he added, "But don't forget, God has willed goodness to follow from every hardship and pain."[60]

With that, his second source of strength passed away, just as Abu Talib had.[61] When Khadija was about sixty-five years old, she left the troubles of this world that holy night, and traveled to the eternal realm and her palace of pearls, in a place with no more trouble or fatigue.

Accordingly, a life that began on the Night of Power (Laylat al-Qadr) also ended on the Night of Power. The Prophet himself took her to Hajun Cemetery, the entrance to the everlasting world; he put her in the soil himself and leveled the ground himself.[62]

She held the honor of many 'firsts' in her life, and she maintained this title even as she departed from the world and all that was in it, by being the first martyr from the Prophet's family.

As for the Prophet, his troubles would now increase because two of his greatest supporters had passed away, and the Quraysh would become bolder and redouble their efforts against him.

Before long, however, he would be blessed with Miraj (the Ascension, his night journey to the Heavens), whereby the doors of Heaven were opened and he witnessed amazing scenes known only to God, as a reward for the mournful days that he had to endure. The Miraj would be the only time Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, would receive revelation directly from God.

UNFORGETTABLE MEMORIES

The bitterness of her absence affected him deeply. In the next years, before the emigration to Medina, he was lonely and seemed to be living constantly with her memory. It was as if she had not died and she was just out of reach in the next room. One day, one of his Companions came to him and said, "O Messenger of God, you seem as if you are bent double with sorrow because of Khadija's absence." What could he say to the obvious? He replied simply, "Yes," and then continued, "She was the mother of my children and the mistress of my house."

One day, Fatima came to her father, the Prophet, and asked, "Where is my mother Khadija now?" The answer was immediate: "In a castle made from bamboo." Fatima's questions continued: "Is it the bamboo we know?" Since the materials in this world must be different from those of the other world, he said, "No, no, bamboo decorated with pearls, emeralds, and coral,"[63] and continued to describe her mother's palace to Fatima.

After the death of Khadija, such a cloud of sorrow enveloped him that those who saw him from a distance were fearful that something was going to happen to the Prophet. It continued thus until his second marriage to Aisha, years later in Medina.

The Prophet was alone; he had only the orphans Khadija had left in his care. However, the Prophet would mention Khadija's name at every opportunity, talking of her virtues to nearly everyone he saw.

A 19th century photo of the tomb of Khadija al-Kubra

ZAYNAB AND HER HUSBAND

As we mentioned before, Abu al-As did not bow to the pressures on the Prophet's sons-in-law to divorce; he would not leave his wife, Zaynab. He was one of the leaders in Mecca in terms of wealth and property, and he was also well known for his excellent business ethics. He was also the nephew of Khadija, and she saw him as a son. It had been her idea to marry Zaynab to Abu al-As, and when she had spoken to the Prophet about it, he had agreed to the match. When the revelations started coming, the Prophet's daughters readily accepted Islam, while his sons-in-law wanted to live according to the old terms. The situation did not much affect Abu Lahab's two sons, Utba and Utayba, who were willing to break up their marriages, but for Abu al-As, it was different. He had a peaceful home with a daughter named Umama and a son named Ali.

At the same time, even though he had the greatest respect and admiration for his father-in-law, Muhammad the Trustworthy, and his mother-in-law and aunt, Khadija, he could not rid himself of the community pressure placed on him. He was afraid that they would say, "He could not stand up to his wife! He left the religion of his ancestors to become Muslim because of her." Because of this, he could not express his acceptance of Islam. That was why Zaynab could not emi-

grate with her father and stayed in Mecca with her husband instead.

Finally, the Emigration came to pass, and the Battle of Badr was imminent. The pressures on Abu al-As were increasing. When it came to the idea of war, the Meccan non-believers started to pressure the likes of Abbas and Abu al-As, people who were close to the Prophet but were still on their (opposing) side. For the non-believers, this was the time when such people should show their allegiance. At the slightest show of hesitancy, they would say, "Rather than stay with his caravan and save the Quraysh's property, he disappeared with his wife and ran off." Perhaps he should have paid them no heed, but Abu al-As had not, as yet, reached the maturity to dismiss these ideas.

In the end, Abu al-As was among the Meccans who came to Badr. The skirmishes had now become an open war, and how it would end was not at all clear. The battle was heated and the Muslims were victorious. Among the Quraysh, there were people who died and some who were taken captive. Abu al-As was taken prisoner.

There were long discussions as to how to treat the prisoners because this was the first time they had dealt with such a matter. It was eventually decided that to gain their freedom those prisoners who knew how to read and write had to teach ten Muslims who did not, and those who were illiterate would be released in return for ransom.

The Quraysh, hearing this verdict, started sending the ransoms, one by one, to free the captives. Zaynab sent the necklace given to her by her mother Khadija, along with Umar ibn Rabia, Abu al-As' brother, to free him from captivity, even though he was a non-believer. She did this in the hope

that his heart would soften since, knowing his nature, she believed he might use this as an opportunity to accept Islam.

While the proper course of action regarding the captives was under discussion, a money bag was brought and dropped off in front of the Prophet. The ones who brought it said, "This is the ransom that Zaynab sends for her prisoner."

So, he opened the money bag, and in it he saw the necklace that had belonged to his beloved Khadija. This necklace, which he had not seen in years, took him back to those long-ago times in Mecca. His eyes once again saw the past. This was the necklace that Khadija had taken from her own neck and fastened lovingly on her daughter on her wedding day. It was obvious that, through the necklace, he remembered Khadija and became sentimental and emotional.

There was silence among the Companions, each wondering how this was going to be resolved. This silence was broken with his warm words of mercy. He turned to those around him and requested, "If you will, let Zaynab's prisoner go and give her back her property."

Would not the Companions do anything that the Prophet requested? Did not the Qur'an leave it up to the people as to whether they wanted to take ransom or let the prisoners go without a price?[64] Immediately, words of acceptance came from all that were there. They did not want to contradict him in anything, because they were devoted to him. Not only with regards to the things he openly requested, but also in anything they thought he might want, they would race to serve him even before he mentioned it. Their hearts were in absolute surrender.

In truth, if he wished, he could have resolved the matter without talking to the Companions because God had given

him this authority and they had endorsed it. However, he was demonstrating the importance of consultation in proper leadership, as he had done before—even in the gravest of matters. When they had set out to follow the Quraysh caravan and were unexpectedly faced with the Meccan army at Badr, he did not decide to fight them before discussing it with his people to get their view. Leading emigrants like Abu Bakr and Umar had stated that they were with him unequivocally. However, there was no sound from the Helpers, the people of Medina.

When they realized that the Prophet was waiting for a response from them, Sa'd ibn Mu'adh—representing the Helpers—stood up and said, "Apparently, you mean to hear from us, O God's Messenger! We believe you and endorse you. We witness to the fact that all you have brought is the truth. We give you our word and will remain true to our word. Go in any direction, O God's Messenger! We are all with you. I swear to the One that has sent you that had you shown us the ocean and willed us to do so, every one of us would dive into it as well. We have no fear of meeting with the enemy tomorrow. We have fortitude in battle, and you can depend on us to the last. It is hoped that, through us, God will grant you good tidings of victory. With God's blessing, let us go forward, O God's Messenger!"[65]

With such unconditional obedience, the matter at hand was naturally resolved as soon as he asked them. Since he had their acceptance from the heart, Abu al-As could be released.

However, they saw that he was called over to the Prophet. He bent down whispering something in Abu al-As' ear, who nodded his head in acknowledgment. Only God knew what was being said at that time.

This matter was closed, and Abu al-As, together with the necklace, set off for Mecca. When she heard of his arrival, Zaynab met him with happiness. He was her husband and he was returning from war safe and sound. Could there be a greater happiness than this?

But there was sadness in Abu al-As. It was clear that there was something else that grieved him, overshadowing even his release from captivity. So, Zaynab asked, "What is wrong? Why are you so forlorn?"

It was as if he had not heard the question; he did not react. It was obvious that there was something even more serious going on. Zaynab asked many times, thinking that it is impossible to find a solution to a problem before knowing what it is.

Finally, Abu al-As started to speak after a long silence. "We have come to an end, my dear! It is time to separate." Suddenly, there was a heavy silence in the air. He continued, "Yes, this is painful, but..." and his tears prevented him from finishing. She understood what was happening and began sobbing uncontrollably. There had to be a reason for this separation out of nowhere. First, she thought that he was giving in to the pressures from the Quraysh and said, "So, you too have fallen into the trap of the Quraysh and are forced to do what they want and leave me?"

These words were like daggers to Abu al-As who said immediately, "No! I have not surrendered to the Quraysh like Utba and Utayba. I neither gave them my word, nor did I enter into such an agreement with them." So, then, what was the reason? Zaynab asked, "Then, why are we separating?"

Summoning all his courage, he said, "I promised and I have to stay true to my promise." "What promise? To whom

did you promise?" He replied, "To your blessed father. He wanted me to send you back and said that Islam had separated us. According to his faith, it is not acceptable that you stay married to me!" "Well," answered Zaynab, "if you became Muslim, then we could live together again and go to Medina and live there."

Abu al-As answered her, "This is easy for you to say, but difficult for me. Do you want the Quraysh to be able to say that I became Muslim to have you by my side, or that I was scared of being taken captive again? Would you give them such a weapon against me? If the situation were different, perhaps I would have done as you say. But as it stands, there is nothing left for me but to be patient. Get ready to go!"

It was obvious they had come to the end of the road. She was in deep sorrow. She had put forth so much effort, yet she could not make him accept Islam. On the other hand, there was the prospect of reuniting with her father. There could be no greater happiness, but she wished they could both enjoy the same happiness together. While she was thinking of these things, Abu al-As said, "Your father sent Zayd ibn Haritha and a few other friends from the Helpers to take you back. They are waiting for you in the valley of Ya'juj. Hurry, and don't make them wait."

"Will you not come with me?" she asked one last time. "No, my dear! This is what your father wants, and I am going to do exactly as he wishes."

At this point, overcome, he left the home in tears. Zaynab started to get ready for the road. When she finished her packing, Abu al-As asked his brother, Kinana, to accompany her to where Zayd was waiting for her. Thus, she began her sorrowful journey of separation.

However, it seemed that this journey was not going to be easy. Leaders from the Quraysh stopped them when they came to a place called Dhu-Tuwa. One of them was Hubar ibn al-Aswad, a ferocious enemy of the Muslims. He was in a rage and wanted to avenge the Meccan loss at Badr. He began assaulting and wounding their camel with a spear, making the camel irritated and uneasy. He kept provoking the animal until it went wild and fell down, throwing Zaynab from its back.

Hubar stood over the fallen camel, brandishing his weapon to keep them from approaching, and shouted, "I swear that if anyone tries to come close, I will fill him with holes!" Nobody had the courage to move.

Then, Abu Sufyan raised his voice: "O brother of Abu al-As! Put down your arrows and let us talk."

Her brother-in-law was Zaynab's only hope—but Kinana did not want to oppose Abu Sufyan and had no such intention. How could he stand up to the leaders of his tribe? Their word was law. They were on the same side. He had only come to display a sense of loyalty to his word to Abu al-As.

Abu Sufyan, who was approaching, started to talk: "O son of Rabia, what happened to us did not happen to you, did it?" He continued, "You cannot be seen with this woman giving her safe passage in broad daylight. You know the pain and calamity that has befallen us because of Muhammad and his people. When they see you conveying his daughter like this, they will think that this is another calamity that has come our way. This would be a great degradation to us. I swear that we do not need to keep his daughter with us; we will not take revenge on her either. You do what is right, and take this woman and return to Mecca. Let the people see that we have brought

her back. Then, later on, secretly, you may convey her to where you want to take her."

For Kinana, this was torment; under normal circumstances, this would not have been accepted. Too often, small matters such as these sparked wars that could last for centuries. The matter was not a war because of religion but for a family's honor and a threat to people. Even though it was difficult to accept, he had to say yes, for the sake of the moans that were reaching his ear.

Zaynab was doubled over in pain and losing large amounts of blood. Later on, it would be discovered that Zaynab had suffered a miscarriage, in addition to her severe pain, because of this violence.

As Abu Sufyan had commanded, they gave up and returned to Mecca. This incident would be heard everywhere. When Abu Sufyan's wife, the daughter of Utba, Hind, heard what was done to Zaynab, she hurled the most damaging insults at the leaders of Mecca: "Why wasn't this kind of courage shown in Badr instead of towards a lonely and defenseless woman? Why do they turn into lions after the war and show their teeth after the fighting is done?"

A few days later, Kinana took to the road again with Zaynab, whose wounds had somewhat healed, and left her with Zayd ibn Haritha.[66]

After a long and arduous journey, they arrived in Medina, where Zaynab was met by the Prophet and other relatives. When he heard what she had gone through, God's Messenger was deeply distressed and stated that those who had done this were going to pay for it.

Years went by before fate made Zaynab and Abu al-As meet in Medina. One day, Abu al-As set out with a caravan

belonging to the Quraysh. He traveled Damascus, purchased some goods, and was taking them back to Mecca when a skirmish took place, and he was taken prisoner by the Medinans. He was given the opportunity to convert and he refused. When she heard that he was again a captive, Zaynab ran to the mosque where they were gathered and said, "O people! I give Abu al-As, son of Rabia, amnesty."

At that time, our Prophet had already started his prayer and was worshipping. After he finished his prayers, he turned to the congregation and asked, "O people! Did you also hear what I heard?" They said, "Yes, O Messenger of God."

He went on, "I swear by God that till I heard what you also heard, I had no idea this was happening. However, it is our duty to stand behind the amnesty that a fellow Muslim has offered." Then, he approached Zaynab and spoke with her. Returning to the mosque, he said to his people, "Undoubtedly, you know the situation. You can give him back his property and send him back, and this is what we would like. However, you can also take his property and use it; it is captured property, so this is your right."

The believers understood and they said all at once, "O Prophet! We want to give all his property back to him."

Abu al-As was released for the second time. He went back to Mecca with his goods intact.

When he reached Mecca, he distributed everyone's goods to them, one by one. After giving back what was due, he said, "O people of Quraysh! Is there anyone left who has to get anything from me?" to which they replied, "No, we have seen your loyalty." Upon this he said, "I bear witness that there is no deity other than God, and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger! I swear that the thing that

stopped me from becoming a Muslim to this date is my fear that you would think I did it to take over your property. God has granted me the ability to give it all back to you, and I have nothing of yours with me. I have become a Muslim."

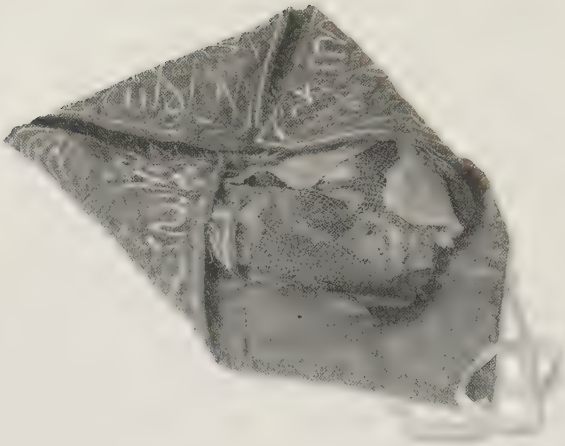
It was time for him to say farewell to Mecca and the Meccans. He went straight to Medina. He went to the mosque and repeated his testimony and oath in front of the Prophet.

The Prophet, who was very happy at his return, married him to his daughter Zaynab again.[67] However, this marriage would not last long; at the beginning of the eighth year after the Emigration to Medina, Zaynab joined her mother Khadija in the next life. Four years later, Abu al-As also passed away.

They had left a daughter named Umama and a son named Ali. Umama would come to the mosque from time to time and play with her grandfather, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. She would climb on his shoulders and back when he was praying.

On one occasion, there was a necklace among the gifts that came to him. He took it to Umama and put it on her neck. It had reminded him of the necklace that Khadija had put on Fatima's neck years before.

When Fatima recognized the signs of her own approaching death, she advised her husband Ali to marry Zaynab's daughter Umama after she was gone. So, after grieving for his beloved first wife, he wed Umama as Fatima had wished.[68]



The Bridal Veil of Fatima az-Zahra
Topkapi Palace Museum, Inventory no. 21/480

The box of Fatima az-Zahra
Topkapi Palace Museum, Inventory no. 21/70

UNDYING LOYALTY

Khadija had left such an impression on her husband, and had such a lasting place in his heart that he visited her old friends sometimes and try to keep the memories of her alive. There was no one that could fill her place; God's Messenger stayed alone for three years after her passing, and despite the extraordinary hardships of that time, did not consider remarriage till much later when the new community was established in Medina.

When many years had passed, the time came of Mecca's conquest. After all the eventful years, including the Emigration and the battles of Badr, Uhud, The Trench, and Hudaybiya, Mecca, which had turned out the believers and left them to their death in Shib Abi Talib, was ready to surrender. Finally, the believers' cries again echoed in the valleys of Mecca, but this time, instead of wailing, there was be joyful music, for they were strong and had been granted victory at last. Where a small persecuted band of Muslims had been exiled from their homes and city, now an army of ten thousand had left Medina and was coming towards Mecca, where the good tidings of its conquest was inevitable.

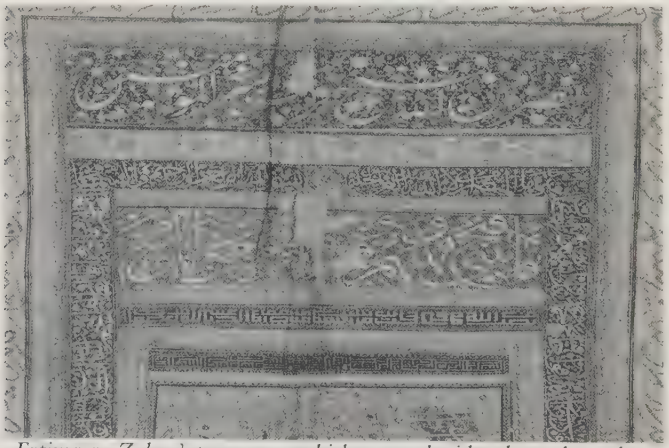
As he approached Mecca, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was returning to Khadija's resting place. On his way into the city, he went to the cemetery in Hajun to the grave of his loyal wife, the one who would never fade from his memory. His life was an example for all, and in his actions toward Khadija, he was the epitome of loyalty. He

stood by her grave and God knows what memories passed before his eyes and what prayers he uttered. Perhaps her dedication, sacrifice, and commitment to God's way came alive again for him. He prayed for her for hours.

Later, he returned to the tents that the army had erected in Abtah, and he entered Mecca with his Companions from all sides.

Her legacy—her children—were parting one after another from him. Qasim, who had still been an infant; Abd Allah, who also died as a baby; and their daughters, Zaynab, Umm Kulthum, and Ruqayya had all left this world to be reunited with their mother in the Hereafter.

In these last days, of all his children with Khadija only Fatima remained in the world. She was a source of consolation for the Prophet. Yet, she too would not live very much longer; six months after her father's death, unable to bear the absence of her beloved parents, she would be reunited with them in the other world.



Fatima az-Zahra's prayer rug which was embroidered at a later date
Topkapi Palace Museum, Inventory no. 21/14

CONCLUSION

Thus was the exemplary life of Khadija. Her place in the eyes of God and of the Prophet is obvious. But as we have seen, this value was earned and not merely handed to her. It is obvious that one cannot reach such an eminent achievement without overcoming many obstacles and whatever tests destiny may bring.

People gain merit through the sacrifices they make. They also show their true colors in the patience they display in the face of hardships, their courage, and their determination to move on without faltering. Every difficult time in history has also produced its heroes. Khadija was one of the heroes of the first days of Islam. She lived a legendary life, and this legend is told by God Himself, and His most beloved servant, the Last Prophet.

And how could it be otherwise? She was the first comforter and helper the Last Prophet would run to whenever he was in need. She was not only at the forefront when it came to devotion and sacrifice, but also exemplified the peak of virtue and nobility of spirit. There was no one that could match her generosity and beneficence. How many wealthy people are there today who have given all their wealth for the sake of God and His Prophet until they, themselves, were in need of dry bread and suffering from starvation? It is easy to claim that we would do this, but when it comes to the moment of truth, the real heroes who can withstand such conditions—who will sacrifice everything—are few and far between.

Undoubtedly, considering what we have seen of her life, we may ask, "Has there ever been anyone above Khadija? Has the world ever seen the like of her?" History proves that the answer is undeniably no.

Thus, those who admire her should strive to live a life like hers. Indeed, there is no better way to secure the blessing of God and His Prophet and to be remembered after we have gone into the next world.

THE MAJOR EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF KHADIJA

For easy reference, this is a short chronology of major events in the life of Khadija referred to in the book:

556 - Birth of Khadija
- Marriage with Abu Hala
  - Birth of the first son, Hind
  - Birth of the second son, Hala
  - Abu Hala dies at war and Khadija inherits his fortune.
- Marriage with Atik ibn Abid
  - Birth of a daughter, Hind
  - Atik ibn Abid dies at war.
- Khadija does not have in mind to marry again and closes the door to all proposals.
- Wealthy tradeswoman Khadija conducts international business in the Roman and Persian Empires as well as the Gassasina, Hira, and Damascus regions.

595 - Khadija is in search of personnel to hire for her trade caravan to Damascus.
- Abu Talib's proposal to Khadija to recruit Muhammad the Trustworthy to lead the caravan.
- The meeting of Khadija and the Prophet.
- Khadija has her best servant Maysara go on the trade caravan with Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.
- Khadija's cousin Waraqa ibn Nawfal assures her that Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is none

other than the awaited Prophet after she reports Maysara's experiences during the journey of the trade caravan to him.

- Khadija's close friend Nafisa bint Munya tells Muhammad of her marriage proposal.

596 - Marriage to Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him

- Having investigated her husband's life closely, Khadija invites even his wet-nurse Halima to their wedding feast.

598 - Birth of a son, Qasim

600 - Death of Qasim

600 - Birth of a daughter, Zaynab

603 - Birth of a daughter, Ruqayya

605 - Birth of a daughter, Umm Qulthum

608 - Birth of a daughter, Fatima

609 - Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, makes long retreats to a mountain-top cave on the Mount of Light.

610 - The First Revelation in the cave of Hira in the month of Ramadan.

- First congregational prayer. The Prophet leads the first congregational prayer with Khadija standing behind him.
- First call to Islam. The Prophet invites his nearest of kin to the faith.

612 - Birth of a son, Abdullah

- Khadija's exchanges with the Angel Gabriel.

613 - Open invitation to the people of Mecca to join Islam and the first wave of opposition and oppression by the Quraysh

- Abu Lahab's sons Utba and Utayba give in to the pressures of the Quraysh and break up their marriages with the Prophet's daughters Ruqayya and Umm Qulthum.

615 - First emigration in Islam. The Prophet's daughter Ruqayya leaves for Abyssinia with her husband Uthman and a party of Muslims.

616 - Second emigration to Abyssinia

617 - Intense opposition and the years of boycott by the Quraysh

620 - Hakim ibn Hizam's support of his aunt Khadija sets in motion events leading to the annulling of the boycott.

- Boycott ends
- Year of Sorrow - Prophet's greatest protector Abu Talib passes away.
- Khadija is unable to attend the funeral as she is on her sick bed
- The departure of Khadija from this world in Mecca.

NOTES

1 The war of Fijar is a series of wars carried on between the Quraysh and Hawazin in about 580-590 CE.

2 Since the invaders had brought some elephants with them, the year of their campaign came to be known as the "Year of the Elephant," which coincides with the year 571 CE and also happens to be the year of the birth of Muhammad, the future prophet, peace and blessings be upon him.

3 Bukhari, *Sahih Bukhari*, 2/521 (1369).

4 Ibn Athir, *Usud al-Ghaba*, 2/58.

5 As-Saff 61:6.

6 Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, 4/540 (2288).

7 Ibn Athir, ibid., 5/417.

8 Dhahabi, *Siyar A'lam an-Nubala*, 1/129.

9 Ibn Athir, ibid., 2/308.

10 Bukhari, ibid., 3/1047 (2692); Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 4/1879 (2425).

11 The Ka'ba is the holiest place in Islam. The direction Muslims face during prayer is the direction from their location on Earth towards the Ka'ba.

12 Abduh Yamani, ibid., p. 37.

13 Hijaz is the northwest region of the Arabian Peninsula that includes the holy lands of Mecca and Medina.

14 Ibn Athir, ibid., 5/390; Ibn Hajar, *Isaba*, 6/557.

15 Abduh Yamani, *Umm al-Mu'minin Khadija bint Khuwaylid Sayyidatun fi Qalb al-Mustafa*, p. 26.

16 Yamani, ibid., 27. In some narrations, it is reported that this was a Jewish scholar of the Torah.

17 Ibn Hajar, ibid., 7/601.

18 Zurqani, *Sharh al-Mawahib*, 1/200.

19 Zuhri, *Tabaqat al-Kubra*, 1/156; Isbahani, *Dalail an-Nubuwwa*, 1/178.

20 Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqat*, 1/130.

21 Yamani, ibid., 119.

22 Zuhri, ibid., 1/130.

23 Zuhri, ibid., 1/130.

[24] Ibn Sa'd, ibid., 1/130.

[25] Suyuti, *Al-Khasais al-Kubra*, 1/51.

[26] Ibn Hisham, *As-Sirat an-Nabawiyya*, 2/10.

[27] According to some other sources, the Prophet also promised twenty camels, which is equivalent to five hundred dirhams.

[28] In some narrations, this uncle is reported to be Waraqa ibn Nawfal.

[29] Yamani, ibid., 65.

[30] Ibn Ishaq, *Ahbar Mecca*, 5/206.

[31] Ibn Abdul Barr, *Istiab*, 3/1038.

[32] Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, 5/700; Ibn al-Athir, ibid., 7/216.

[33] Bukhari, ibid., 4/1894 (4670).

[34] Bukhari, ibid., 6/2561 (6581).

[35] Bukhari, ibid., 1/4 (3).

[36] Ibn Hammad, *Ad-Dhurriyyat at-Tahira*, 1/33.

[37] Ibn Hajar, *Isaba*, 7/601; Munawi, *Fayd al-Qadir*, 3/19.

[38] Bukhari, ibid., 1/4 (3).

[39] Ibn Abdul Barr, ibid., 3/1096.

[40] Bukhari, ibid., 3/1164 (3017); Isbahani, *Mustadrak*, 2/266 (1504).

[41] Bukhari, ibid., 4/1721 (4364).

[42] Haysami, *Majma al-Zawaid*, 9/349.

[43] Ibn Hisham, ibid., 1/244.

[44] Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 1/209-210; Ibn Sa'd, ibid., 8/18.

[45] Hakim, *Mustadrak*, 3/201 (4842).

[46] Bukhari, ibid., 3/1389 (3607).

[47] Yamani, ibid., 13.

[48] Tabarani, *Mu'jam al-Kabir*, 23/11; Dhahabi, *Siyar al-A'lam an-Nubala*, 2/112.

[49] Haysami, ibid., 8/256; Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bari*, 7/720.

[50] Ibn Abdul Barr, ibid., 4/1821.

[51] Ibn Sa'd, ibid., 3/42.

[52] Ibn Hajar, ibid., 7/604.

[53] Muslim, ibid., 4/1886 (2430).

[54] Haysami, ibid., 9/218.

[55] Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidaya wa'n-Nihaya*, 4/71.

[56] Bukhari, *Riqaq*, 17; Darimi, *Jihad*, 22.

[57] Tabari, *Tarih at-Tabari*, 1/550.

[58] Ibn Maja, *Sunan*, 1/484 (1512).

[59] Ibn Hisham, ibid., 2/265.

[60] Haysami, ibid., 9/218.

[61] The year the Prophet's uncle, Abu Talib, and his beloved wife, Khadija, passed away became known as the "Year of Sorrow."

[62] Ibn Sa'd, ibid., 8/18.

[63] Haysami, ibid., 9/223.

[64] Muhammad 48:4.

[65] Ahmad ibn Hanbal, ibid., 1/255, 284; 3/438; 5/276, 382.

[66] Tabari, ibid., 2/470.

[67] Yamani, ibid., 157.

[68] Hakim, ibid., 3/25 (4306).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Abu Abd Allah ash-Shaybani, *Musnad*, I-VI, Egypt: Muassasat al-Qurtuba, undated.

Akk, Khalid Abdur Rahman al-Akk, *Mawsuat al-'Uzamai Hawl ar-Rasul*, I–III, Damascus: Dar un-Nafais, 1991.

Bukhari, Abu Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari, *Sahih Bukhari*, I–VI, Beirut: Dar ibn Kathir, 1987.

Dhahabi, Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Uthman ad-Dhahabi, *Siyar A'lam an-Nubala,* I–XXIII, Beirut: Muassasat ar-Risala, 1413 AH.

Jamili, as-Sayyid, *Nisaun Hawl ar-Rasul*, Al-Maktabat at-Tawfikiyya, undated.

Hakim, Abu Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Abd Allah an-Naysaburi, *Al-Mustadrak ala's-Sahihayn,* I–V, Beirut: Dar al-Qutb al-Ilmiyya, 1990.

Halabi, Mahmud Tu'ma, *Al-Maedat al-Awail min Sahabiyyat ar-Rasul*, Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifa, 2004.

Haysami, Ali ibn Abi Bakr al-Haysami, *Al-Majma az-Zawaid,* I–X, Cairo: Dar ar-Rayyan li't-Turas-Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1407 AH.

Ibn Abdul Barr, Yusuf ibn Abd Allah ibn Muhammad, *Al-Istiab,* I–IV, Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1412 AH.

Ibn Athir, *Usd al-Ghaba*, Cairo: Dar ush-Shaab, 1970.

Ibn Hajar, Ahmad ibn Ali al-Askalani, *Al-Isaba,* I–VIII, Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1992.

Ibn Hammad, Abu Bishr Muhammad ibn Ahmad, *Ad-Dhurriyyat at-Tahira*, Kuwait: Dar as-Salafiyya, 1407 AH.

Ibn Hisham, Abdul Malik ibn Hisham ibn Ayyub al-Himyari, *As-Sirat an-Nabawiyya*, I–VI, Beyrut: Dar al-Jil, 1411 AH.

Ibn Ishaq, Muhammad ibn Ishaq ibn Abbas al-Fakihi, *Ahbar Mecca,* I–VI, Beirut: Dar al-Hadar, 1414 AH.

Ibn Kathir, Abu al-Fida Ismail ibn Umar ibn Kathir ad-Dimashki, *Al-Bidaya wa'n-Nihaya,* I–XIV, Beirut: Dar al-Qutb al-Ilmiyya, 1988.

Ibn Maja, Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Kazwini, *As-Sunan,* I–II, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, undated.

Ibn Sa'd, *At-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, I–VIII, Beirut: Dar as-Sadir, undated.

Isbahani, Ismail ibn Muhammad ibn al-Fadl at-Taymi al-Isbahani, *Dalail an-Nubuwwa*, (Edition critique by Muhammad al-Haddad), Riyad: Dar at-Tayba, 1409 AH.

Munawi, Muhammad Abdur Rauf ibn Ali al-Munawi, *Fayd al-Qadir Sharh al-Jami as-Saghir,* I–VI, Egypt: Al-Maktabat at-Tijariyyat al-Kubra, 1356 AH.

Muslim, Abu al-Husayn al-Hajjaj an-Naysaburi, *Sahih Muslim,* I–V, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya at-Turas al-Arabi, undated.

Shanawi, Abdul Aziz, *Suwarun min Hayat as-Sahabiyyat Durusun wa Ibar*, Mansura: Maktabat al-Iman, undated.

Shibli, Mahmud, *Hayat Umm al-Mu'minin Khadija*, Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1992.

Suyuti, Abdur Rahman ibn al-Kamal Jalaluddin as-Suyuti, *Al-Khasais al-Kubra*, Beirut: Dar al-Qutb al-Ilmiyya, 1985.

Tabarani, Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn Ahmad Tabarani, *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabir* (Edition critique by Hamdi ibn Abdul Majid as-Salafi), I–XX, Mosul: Maktabat al-Ulum wa'l-Hikam, 1404 AH.

Tabari, Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Yazid ibn Khalid at-Tabari, *Tarih al-Umam wa'l-Muluk (Tarih at-Tabari),* I–V, Beirut: Dar al-Qutb al-Ilmiyya, 1407 AH.

Tawfik, Muhammad Sabit, *Awwalu man Aslamat mina'n-Nisa as-Sayyida Khadija bint Khuwaylid*, Riyad: Maktabat al-Ubaykan, 2000.

Tirmidhi, *Al-Jami us-Sahih*, Beirut: Dar Ihya at-Turas al-Arabi, undated.

Yamani, Muhammad Abduh, *Umm al-Mu'minin Khadija bint Khuwaylid Sayyidatun fi Qalb al-Mustafa*, Damascus: Muassasat al-Ulum al-Qur'an, Third Edition, 2002.

Zuhri, *Tabaqat al-Kubra*, (Edition Critique by Ali Muhammad Umar) Cairo: Maktabat al-Hanji, 2001.

Zurqani, *Sharh al-Mawahib al-Laduniyya*, Cairo: Dar at-Tibaat al-Miriyya, 1854.

"Mary, mother of Jesus, is the best of the women of the heavens; and the worthiest woman of the earth is Khadija, daughter of Khuwaylid."

Prophet Muhammad

Every difficult time in history has also produced its heroes. Khadija was one of the heroes of the first days of Islam. She lived a legendary life, and this legend is told by God Himself, and His most beloved servant, the Last Prophet.

Exploring the gestation period of Islam, this biography focuses on the exceptional life story of one of the four greatest women of all time, one who wholeheartedly proclaimed her submission to the divine message delivered through the Prophet Muhammad. Khadija al-Kubra stands out in history not only as the first person to declare her faith in Islam but also as the strongest advocate and confidante of the Prophet Muhammad, and an individual who was a constant source of help to the early Muslim community. Addressing her unparalleled devotion to the message of the Prophet, this book shines light on a figure who is an ideal role model for all men and women, Muslim and non-Muslim alike.

Reşit Haylamaz is the editor-in-chief of Kaynak Publishing Group in Istanbul. He is the author of numerous books on leading figures of the history of Islam, including the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, his Companions, in addition to his Jesus: His Mission and Miracles.

KR-459-258

ISBN 978-1-59784-121-4

9 781597 841214 01295

www.tughrabooks.com

US $12.95 Can. $13.80